

What follows below is a list of links to my more unbridled writings. Some of these ramble just too far off the happy trail of Krsna consciousness. Some are pretty pungent in their sarcasm--though I must mention that I do have readers who much like the combative mode of presentation.



Thing is, at the bottom of my heart I am actually a soft-hearted kind of guy. Thus, not liking to be the cause of disturbance to others, I sat down recently and started thinking I should just delete these texts. But they've already been posted on In2-MeC, some for a year or more. They were read by thousands of visitors. So I concluded it more honest to shove them into deep freeze on this Crazy House page. They'll live on as curiosities, as sideshow freaks.

So if you're curious, pal, go ahead and thaw these essays out. Hey--you may yet find in them some useful nuggets of wisdom. But be warned: I stuck them in the funny freezer for good reason. Some of this stuff is wackier than a pair of waltzing mice.

Prague, Czech Republic 4 June, 2003

I received another letter about the *Catcher in the Rye* entry of June 2. This one informed me about Internet sites that give evidence that the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, were elaborate frauds. I already know about this conspiracy theory. My take on it is that it is just that--a theory, and nothing more.

In the confusion of such earth-shaking events there will always be news reports and witness testimonies that are contradictory and don't make sense; moreover it is not unusual for governments to hide facts for their own special purposes. This does not mean some grand conspiracy is afoot. It's just the human condition: our senses are imperfect, we make mistakes, we are subject to illusion, and we cheat.

Quite independent from our human frailties, events and aspects of this world we live in often exhibit mysterious coincidences.

I can provide my readers here at In2-MeC with some facts that you can use to build all kinds of interesting conspiracy theories, if you like doing that. Let's start with a fact about myself. My family name is Crowley. That's originally an Irish name. Ireland is not a big country; all families named Crowley are ultimately related to one another at some point in their history. There is a Clan Crowley Society in Ireland that is devoted to tracing out the world-wide Crowley family tree. Now, it so happens that there is a family of Crowleys in Augsburg, Germany. Quite by chance I happened to meet them in the 1980s. This branch of the Crowleys was sired by Aleister Crowley. He was a notorious British occultist and magician of recent times who was known as "the Great Beast." (See the Website [oto-](#)

usa.org/about_thelema.html). These Augsburg Crowleys accepted me as a relative.

Thus I am related to a famous black magician.

But it doesn't stop there.

One of Aleister Crowley's disciples was Jack Parsons (see www.forteantimes.com/articles/132_parsons.shtml and also www.babalon.net/articles/mitchell.html). Parsons was one of the pioneers of the development of rocket fuel and rocket engines in the USA. He began his work in that field before the Second World War. He helped establish the JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, which was also informally called "Jack Parson's Laboratory"). A crater on the moon is named after him too. Jack Parsons is a respected name in US science, but he was a would-be sorcerer who died in a mysterious explosion in 1952, two years after I was born.

Jack Parsons's good friend in the late '40's was L. Ron Hubbard, who is the founder of the Scientology cult. Together they performed a "Babalon Working" in the California desert, the purpose of which was to invite into the human world a demonic spirit of powerful magical abilities.

This is all true.

It is also true that I was born in 1950 in the Crowley lineage, soon after the Babalon Working. On my birth certificate my father's occupation is listed as "Flight Engineer." (He was in the US Air Force, which in 1950 was busy testing Parson's inventions). A few days before I was born, a US Air Force B-36 bomber--which at that time was the largest military aircraft in history, bigger than today's Boeing 747--crashed and burned outside the town of Crowley, Texas.

Is there a connection????????????

Ha ha ha ha ha!!!!!!!

*ISKCON Helsinki, Finland
14 September, 2003*

Ether Or

"Akasa (ether) means the Supreme Lord"
--*Vedanta-sutra* 1.1.22.

"Either it's ether or..."

It's a walk through the Green Lake Park.
In Seattle on 8 October 1968, Srila Prabhupada told
Of this park where the ducks go "quack quack quack."
(Or do they go "quark quark quark"?)
In either case it means a walk

Through mental speculation,
Prabhu.

Speculation, the quack quark quack quark of the mind,
Floats in ether.
SB 3.26.34p: "Mental activities,
Or psychological functions
Of thinking, feeling and willing,
Are also activities on the platform of ethereal existence."

Speculation floats in ether
Together with matter in its potential (quantum? quarkum? quackum?) state.
SB 3.26.34p: "That subtle forms exist in the ether has been proven
By modern science by transmission of television,
By which forms or photographs of one place are transmitted to another place
By the action of the ethereal element."

Imagine!
X-Rays
And speculations of X-Ray Spex
Floating side by side
Like ducks upon a green lake.

A Russian heaven.

And if that's not enough, within ether
Ethereal theories of ether float:
Like, for example,
The idea of a subtle cosmic architecture
Without which we could not perceive matter
Nor even think about it.

The things we see and touch in dimensions of length, width and height.
All that is manifest within ether.
But our thoughts race beyond such gross limitations,
And even beyond axiomatic limitations
Like "two plus two is four."
There are theoretical algebras in which "two plus two"
May equal two or one or zero.
All such realms of perception and conception
Are manifest within ether
Or *akasa*
Or spacetime
Or the quintessence.

Negatively curved space, in which
The angles of a triangle are always less than 180 degrees,
And the ten-dimensional space of superstring theory--
Even if they are "just speculations, Prabhu"--
These really do exist...
Within the ether.

Or do they?

"Either it's ether or..."

But that's just the point, Prabhu
How can you talk about "either or" in the ether?
The ether is generated from the pores of Maha-Visnu
And is known as *adhara-sakti* (*Sri Brahma-samhita* 5.47),
Which means "the energy of accommodation."
Ether accommodates the subtle and gross dimensions
Of all the universes and
every possible and even impossible thought!

Were you thinking of *Dead Reckoning*?
Lizbeth Scott singing to Humphrey Bogart:
"Either It's Real or It Isn't,
There's No Compromise"?

That song floats in the ether too, Prabhu
Along with the Hare Krsna Mahamantra.
Aham...sabdha khe: "I am the sound in ether."

"So then: you're saying there's no difference
Between a cinema song and the Mahamantra?"

Accha! No, that's not what I'm saying.
From these two types of sounds in ether
We must see what differences develop.

Out of spiritual sound develops the consciousness
Of the Name, Form, Qualities, Pastimes and Relationships
Of the Supreme Lord;
Out of material sound develops the consciousness
Of the name, form, qualities, pastimes and relationships
Of the mundane world.

"As this creation begins from the sky--
Ether, then air, then fire, and then water, then land,
Ksitir ap teja marud vyoma--
Similarly, the spiritual world also begins from the spiritual sky.
After this sky ends, then the spiritual sky begins."
(SB lecture 22 January 1975)

*IBSA (ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Sadhana Asrama), Govardhana,
India*

17 December 2003

"I start out in this story a little bit like a hero, which I most certainly am not."

"There's a fair face to the land, surely; but you can't hide the hunger and the guilt. It's a bright guilty world."

"I'd be innocent, officially...but that's a big word: 'innocent.' 'Stupid' is more like it. Well, everybody is somebody's fool..."

These are some lines written by Orson Welles, who was a hero of mine when I was a teenager. He died in 1985. He was celebrated around the world by thoughtful people as a genius scriptwriter, film director and actor. Yes, a genius to *some*, but to many--especially to the money men in Hollywood--Orson Welles was an eccentric, overrated, self-indulgent money-waster. Still, at least one Welles film, *Citizen Kane*, released in 1941, is widely accepted as being among the best movies to come out of Hollywood in all its history.

So, as an idealistic youth I much admired Orson Welles, although I had to admit to myself that most of his films were difficult to digest. I remember how I really, really *tried* to appreciate and understand Welles' tortuously long production of Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, which was released in the 1960s. What I most liked about him was that he made an effort tell his viewing audience more about the meaning of life than 99% percent of the other moviemakers.

Of course, after coming to Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet I realized that Orson Welles really didn't have all that much to say about the meaning of life. He stood out because others had even less, or nothing at all, to say.

Anyway, the lines quoted above sum up for me the message of his art. The first seems to say that it isn't honest for anyone in the material world to pass himself off as a hero, even if he does something great. We know from *Gita* that the credit for action goes to the modes of material nature, not to the spirit soul. Thus a hero is a puppet of material nature acting out a script written by *karma*.

The second line seems to say that behind the beautiful mask of the material world lurks guilty desire. Everyone who takes part in this world shares in its collective guilt.

The third seems to say that some living entities in this guilty material world do seem to be more innocent than others; thus we may be tempted to conclude that some here are good. Welles tells us to never mind delving into the question of good versus evil. The clear fact of material existence is that everyone in it is guilty of being stupid.

So, like I said: I admired Orson Welles for trying to tell people more about life than most film-makers. But as you can see, what he had to say about life was negative. That negativity marked his films with a grotesqueness which was Welle's distinctive style. See the dictionary:

Grotesque

1. Characterized by ludicrous or incongruous distortion, as of appearance or manner.
2. Outlandish or bizarre, as in character or appearance.
3. Of, relating to, or being the grotesque style in art or a work executed in this style.

Let me just interrupt myself to tell you why I am thinking about Orson Welles after so many years. While I was in New Zealand I had a talk with Padmasambhava Prabhu about traditional Chinese theater. That is something I know nothing about, though I've always been fascinated by the photos I've seen of Chinese actors dressed in the old-style costumery. Padmasambhava Prabhu is Chinese (he was born in Malaysia, not in China itself). One thing he told me is that most traditional Chinese plays present a courtroom scene: either a court presided over by a human judge, or the court of the Chinese equivalent to Yamaraja.

That made me think of *The Lady from Shanghai*, a Welles film of 1948. At one point Welles takes his viewers into a theater in San Francisco's Chinatown where onstage a courtroom scene is being performed in the traditional way, with the actors dressed in long fancy silk gowns and elaborate crowns. To the Western eye, the music, singing and mannerisms of Chinese theater are rather grotesque. The funny thing is that shortly before that scene of Chinese theater, *The Lady from Shanghai* shows us an American courtroom scene. This is much *more* grotesque. I think what Welles was hinting at is that what we accept as normal in modern life is even stranger than "strange" Chinese theater.

The Lady from Shanghai was a flop in 1948 because people then could not stomach its grotesqueness. Nor could they appreciate its sly commentary that they--the viewing audience--are stupid for accepting the material world as it looks without facing what it really is, a prison for those guilty of stupidity.

Now things have changed. There's a slang word much in use among young people: "grotty", a hip way of saying grotesque. It's in now, and Orson Welles is lionized as being ahead of his time. I hear there's a big demand for his films these days.

But the grotesque is a dead end. Where's the lasting satisfaction in portraying over and over the absurdity of material existence? Even worse than a dead end, it is a dangerous end. Let me mention Owen Barfield again. As an investigator of consciousness, he saw a grave danger in the growing obsession in modern people for the dark side of the mind.

Today's taste for the grotesque can be traced back to Europe of three hundred years ago. In *Dimensions of Good and Evil* I traced out this trend in Chapter Nineteen.

The idyllic imagination shies away from a rigorous definition of goodness. It expects virtue to flow from freedom rather than the discipline of character. Thus the idyllic imagination is sentimental, not perfectional. This sentimental formulation of morality acquired its ideological voice in the writings of the Swiss-French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who sparked an eighteenth-century revolution in European thought known as Romanticism.

Romanticism was a reaction to the so-called Enlightenment Project, which was a seventeenth and eighteenth century French school of rationalism. Rationalism means any doctrine that teaches the supremacy of the human intellect over all other considerations. The French *philosophes* of the Enlightenment--Diderot, d'Alembert, La Mettrie, Condillac, Helvetius, d'Holbach, Turgot and Condorcet, among others--propagated an ideology of "the rational society" that is the precursor of twentieth-century technocracy. William Kilpatrick relates how romanticism arose to challenge the Enlightenment Project:

There was a limit to people's appetite for science, abstraction, and impersonal reason. When the limit was reached, a revolt set in. We now call it Romanticism. The Romantic movement rediscovered art, mystery, and irrationality. And it rediscovered emotions. In fact, it elevated emotion to a position it had never before held in the history of thought. And with this new emphasis on the emotional self came a whole new way of defining morality.

Similarly, the 1960s began with manned space flights that proclaimed to the world the triumph of scientific rationalism. Unexpectedly--during the trauma that followed the Kennedy assassination, while the body count in Vietnam mounted--the sixties were rent by an explosion of idyllic imagination. The blast radiated a shock wave of "pure" (read: undisciplined) sentiment that crashed against the soaring ice-cathedral of "pure" (read: scientific) reason. Though it failed to tumble the cathedral, the wave of sentiment did flood its interior. Barriers of racism and sexism were left in splinters. The gilded altars of wealth, power and intellectual pretension were heaved about. The wave left behind a trove of "new" values that the explosion had dredged up from the underground. This was the remnant of Rousseau's Romantic ideology, which itself had been buried by the wave of hard science, high technology, heavy industry, cut-throat materialism, mass annihilation and grim ideological confrontation that had swept over the face of the globe since the early 1900s.

Rousseau believed that human beings are at heart innocent. They naturally love justice and harmony. The urban structure of civilization--which encourages competition and the ownership of private property--corrupted us. Rousseau marked the path away from citified ruination by his maxim "To thine own self be true." This translates well into such modern pearls of wisdom as "Do your own thing," "Hang loose," "Get in touch with your inner child," "What feels right is right," and "Get back to nature."

Rousseau paid lip service to the virtues of compassion, friendliness and loving kindness, but his own character was undisciplined and shockingly deficient in truthfulness, purity and honesty. Other philosophers of his time, who were sympathetic at first to his message, soon soured as they came to know the dark side of Rousseau's personality. Hume and Voltaire dismissed Rousseau as a monster. Diderot called him "deceitful, vain as Satan, ungrateful, cruel, hypocritical and full of malice." A woman with whom Rousseau was intimate summed him up as "an interesting madman."

The last forty years of the twentieth century have seen any number of interesting madmen who proclaimed a new dawn of peace, love, universal harmony and spirituality. Like Rousseau, these rollicking visionaries of the new romanticism too often turned out to be Pied Pipers who marched the naive into a moral wasteland. In that wasteland, demons lurked.

The idyllic imagination lacks a tragic sense, and as a result it is more easily defeated by tragedy. Last year's Romantic idealist turns out to be this year's suicide. And because the Romantic is essentially naive about evil, he is less resistant to it. As a result, the idyllic imagination, upon encountering boredom, frustration, or temptation, sometimes evolves into..."the diabolic imagination."

...in the late sixties and the subsequent decade the popular imagination was captured by an idyllic vision. During that time, millions of young people turned away from the work ethic and immersed themselves in a world of idyllic dreams...As with previous idyllic flings, however, this one quickly developed a dark side. What began as a vision of Edenic innocence soon evolved into something else. If youngsters of the sixties were wearing flowers in their hair, many youngsters of the next generation were wearing spikes instead of flowers, and listening to a music preoccupied with themes of hopelessness, destruction, suicide, Satanism, and sexual mutilation.

Owen Barfield, who argued that our minds participate in the figuration of the world, warned that people who permit their imaginations to flow free will become captivated by the dark unconscious. That captivation will lead them to envision the world as "fantastically hideous." Barfield was specifically referring to the art of the Surrealists (think of the paintings of Salvadore Dali, for example). Now, the consequence of participatory reality is that the world we first see in "the mind's eye" as poetry, art, music, writing and film, will in time become the world *out there*. It is no accident that as more and more people cultivate a taste for the grotesque, the world around us increasingly appears to be a waking nightmare.

I am dealing with these all these thoughts here in In2-MeC because Vrndaban Dham is so absolutely removed from the grotesquery of the modern world. Sure, there is visible evidence of Kali-*yuga* here too, but the transcendental nature of this holy place renders that influence insignificant, like the buzzing of a mosquito in your room. It's a little bothersome, but it isn't a major disaster. In the world beyond the Dham, human beings are given over to the mentality of mosquitos. They exist to suck blood. Such people are demons and they've turned the world into a living nightmare.

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that those who would fight with monsters should beware that they themselves turn into monsters, for when you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares back into you. Orson Welles wanted a better world, but he had no clear idea of what that better world might be. He never took a pilgrimage to the holy *dhama*. So all he could do was portray the Kali-*yuga* world in a grotesque light. His hope was to shock his audience into some sort of reflection upon their situation. During most of his life, Orson Welles largely failed in that effort. And if now his films are finding a new popularity, it is more because people today *like* the grotesque. Far from being shocked and so moved to change the world for the better, they *want* to see the world in that way. They want to *enjoy* it in that way--as fantastically hideous. When you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares back into you...and changes you.

We should strive instead to see Krsna's pastimes, not the grotesqueries of our imagination.

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THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW



IBSA (ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Sadhana Asrama), Govardhana, India

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What you'll read today has almost nothing to do with Krsna consciousness. It's a copy of a newspaper article about the Beats, the American bohemian literature-poetry movement of the late 1940s to early 1960s. It was sent to me yesterday by my Godbrother HG Prabhupada dasa (look in In2-MeC of May '03 for more about him). I've written about the Beats before, trying to suggest that this movement represents a setting of the stage in American consciousness for the arrival of Srila Prabhupada. But after Srila Prabhupada established his mission in New York in 1965, the Beat leaders did not become devotees. At least Allen Ginsberg chanted Hare Krsna before his poetry readings. What happened to him and the others after Prabhupada can be seen by reading this:

Books of The Times
'When I Was Cool': The Twilight of the Beats
Through an Acolyte's Eyes

February 5, 2004
By JANET MASLIN

Sam Kashner of Merrick, N.Y., quoted abundantly from the Ramones when he filled out his application for higher education (and seldom has that term been more accurate). This led to his acceptance at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics in Boulder, Colo., and to a postcard from one of his Beat idols. It read, in part: "I look forward to meeting you. I hope you can type. Sincerely yours, A. Ginsberg."

The typing would turn out to be crucial. By the time the 19-year-old Mr. Kashner arrived in the midst of the Beat pantheon in the spring of 1976, his heroes were "not quite ready for assisted living, but famous enough to need assistants." They included William S. Burroughs, nicknamed "the Ol' Poisoner" by Gregory Corso, who himself was fond of exclaiming "Penguin dust!," along with Ginsberg, who was more or less in charge.

"You're a sweet boy," Mr. Kashner recalls Ginsberg's telling him. "So unborn."

In this company he would not stay unborn for long. Mr. Kashner's well-named memoir, "When I Was Cool," recounts an uproarious string of character-building geriatric-Beat episodes that left their mark upon him. Burroughs, whose famous voice emerges irresistibly ("We should scam, Salmonella Sam"), contemplated a Martian invasion of the Midwest and taught a course about imaginary maps. He also enlisted Mr. Kashner to look out for Billy Burroughs, the great old reprobate's hard-drinking 30-ish son, whose diet leaned heavily on Lucky Charms cereal because the marshmallows were easy to chew.

Corso liked to threaten, extort and kidnap Mr. Kashner, although he is described here with the utmost affection. ("We're just old men," Mr. Kashner recalls him saying. "Soon to poof into the air.") As for Ginsberg, he apparently turned an interested eye upon this nice young helpmate he had recruited. "I spent a lot of time in front of the mirror before going over to Allen's," Mr. Kashner recalls, "because I noticed that the better looking you were, the more Allen liked your poems."



The Beat movement was born in the late 1940s in the shadow of the atom bomb. Its spiritual roots were a hazy, drug-influenced vision of Buddhism. Marijuana was nirvana and nirvana was marijuana. When Prabhupada came to America in 1965, Allen Ginsberg and some lesser Beats chanted and rendered service. After that they drifted further into eccentricity. Now they are dead.

in Colonial Williamsburg, published some poetry and became a writer about some of the darker, James Ellroyesque aspects of show business history. He published a novel, "Sinatraland," whose main character is a Hoboken window-shade salesman obsessed with Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack. In retrospect that book looks like a dry run for the candid, poignant, hilarious second-fiddle memoir that has finally emerged.

"When I Was Cool" can certainly be appreciated strictly for its wall-to-wall anecdotes. There was the time, for instance, that Ginsberg's Buddhist instructor required him to abandon vanity and shave off his beard, and Mr. Kashner, in his role as caretaker/typist/housekeeper, found the beard in a cigar box. There are the Beats' rivalrous dealings with rock stars. ("The g-dd-m Rolling Stones," Burroughs grouched, adding "You could bring most of them home to Mother.")

And there are frequent, eye-opening insights of the young acolyte, who at one point realizes that some of the female poetry admirers in his midst are also call girls. "You must be here on one of those 'born yesterday' scholarships the Jack Kerouac School gives out," the younger Burroughs told him.

However naïve he sounds here, Mr. Kashner knew then-and knows even better now-that he had stumbled into a chronicler's nirvana. The Kerouac School, a not-yet-accredited offshoot of the first Buddhist college in America, the Naropa Institute (now Naropa University), had recruited him as its very first student. Mr. Kashner's memory has now streamlined that situation and turned himself into virtually the only student, even though others apparently arrived during his two-year tenure. With the help of hindsight, and after countless larger-than-life accounts of Beat exploits, he reanimates the aging renegades and places himself at the center of their attention.

That may be self-serving, but it's understandable. And it's been a long time coming. In his post-Naropa life Mr. Kashner went into his father's window-shade business, lived

But "When I Was Cool" is much more captivating than the standard tales-told-out-of-school reminiscence. And if it does not fully establish Mr. Kashner as the eloquent writer that he wanted to be, it makes up in self-knowledge what it lacks in flair. Mr. Kashner now freely acknowledges trading on the kinds of unrequited crushes that made the Kerouac School go round.

He admits to feeling like a groupie at times, never more so than when Bob Dylan and the Rolling Thunder Revue came to town. And he acknowledges jealousy and resentment of Anne Waldman, a fellow poet and queen of the Kerouac roost, who disappeared with Mr. Dylan for a couple of days and refused to take off her Rolling Thunder whiteface makeup when she returned. "She's going to hate this book," Mr. Kashner writes frankly, "but then, come to think of it, she never liked my poetry, either."

Most memorably Mr. Kashner creates a touching, intimate evocation of the Beat twilight, with Kerouac and Neal Cassady only much-invoked memories and the group's rogue behavior beginning to wear thin. "They fell in front of a cracked mirror, Sam," he says that the younger Burroughs told him. "And they fell in love with that cracked image. They'll just stare at it until they die."

This book's principals had died by January 2001, when Mr. Kashner was at last ready to start writing about them. But he has brought forth a bright, resuscitating testament to their collective memory, for reasons best explained by Naropa's hard-partying, eventually scandal-plagued Buddhist leader, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

"He said the real reason I had come to the Jack Kerouac School," Mr. Kashner writes, "was to be released from my heroes--to find out the truth about them and be free of them, to be able to live my own life." But he is mindful of how much they enriched his life. "When I Was Cool" returns the favor.

Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India
8 April 2004

"It Takes a Village"

(Meaning: Kali Yuga takes a village)

A Vedic Perspective on *Things Fall Apart*

Chinua Achebe is a British-educated writer from Nigeria. At 28 years of age he published his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, in 1958. One of his aims was to rebut the Western justification of European colonialism in Africa that was promoted by British novelists like Joseph Conrad.

Achebe went on to publish twenty more novels, but his first stands out as the most important. Since it appeared forty-five years ago, millions of copies of *Things Fall Apart* were sold around the world; it is required reading in many schools that teach literature.

It would be wrong to assume that because Achebe reacted against the Eurocentric view of Africa championed by Conrad and others, *Things Fall Apart* is a sentimental, nationalistic defense of Africa as it is known by Africans. He is doubtlessly proud of his African heritage, is well-versed in the history of his people, and has strong sympathy for the pre-colonial culture of his country. But *Things Fall Apart* does not depict Africa before the coming of the white man as an idyllic heaven on earth. At the same time the novel makes clear that the Western assumption that Africa advanced under European political hegemony is a conceit.

When the Vedic perspective is brought to bear, *Things Fall Apart* stands as evidence that pre-modern civilization around the world was shaped by Vedic knowledge and culture. Achebe writes of the Ibo people (also called Igbo) of southeastern Nigeria. Traditionally the Ibo are agriculturists who grow yam, cassava, taro, melon, okra, beans, and so on. These crops are considered to be the blessings of the goddess of the earth. Wealthier farmers keep cows and protect them. Before the coming of the white man's urban civilization, the Ibo lived in groupings of villages that had a maximum population of a few thousand. Each household unit in a village occupied a compound of huts, different huts being used by the household for different purposes. For example, within a family compound, men- and womenfolk lived in separate quarters.

The dress of the Ibo was remarkably similar to clothing worn in India during Vedic times. For money, they traditionally used cowries (small seashells); as we see in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 5.14.26, in India cowries were used as money during Vedic times. The traditional alcoholic beverage was palm-wine. In Bengali villages, the old-fashioned way to get drunk is by taking the fermented *ras* of the date-palm. The Ibo didn't know about ghee, but in its stead they used palm-oil in cooking and as the fuel for lamps. Their diet was predominantly vegetarian; flesh foods were prepared from chicken, goats and fish. Marriages were arranged. Parents could hope to marry their of-age daughter into a good family only if she was a virgin. Men could have as many wives as they could afford to maintain. Children were taught not to whistle at night, as that attracts ghosts. Children in India are cautioned the same way.

The Ibo lived according to an elaborate moral code that was dictated by a host of deities. The purpose of morality was to accentuate finer human qualities. For example, during the Week of Peace, which was sacred to the earth goddess, quarreling between people--even within the confines of the household--was completely forbidden. The Ibo understood from this that ideal human life is free of strife; their Week of Peace obliged them to practice this ideal. Transgressions of codes of behavior and taboos might be alleviated by the sacrifice of a chicken or a goat. If a transgression (*achu*) was severe, the transgressor could be banished. In today's climate of exaggerated individualism, we might ask, "What is so bad about banishment?" But in Vedic culture a person's identity was established by his participation in the social body--his *dharma*. For a person to be severed from his *dharma* was as good as death. In social dealings the Ibo were very careful to avoid offenses. Speech was never blunt nor to the point; it was elaborate, ritualized, politely indirect, and interwoven with stories and proverbs. "Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten."

Sometimes different Ibo clans fought wars. If in a war the lives of a dozen men would be lost, that conflict would be remembered as exceptionally bloody. Wars were not declared on whim. If a *causa belli* manifested between two clans, they would first

try to settle it by peaceful means. The path of war was never taken only by the decision of the village council--more importantly, it had to be approved by the Oracle of the Hills and Caves. This Oracle was a sage or supernatural being of great power who lived deep within a cave. He could not be seen directly by the Ibo; he was represented by a priestess who would deliver the Oracle's instructions while she was in trance. If the Oracle disapproved the path of war, the clan dared not fight. For if they did, they would surely lose.

In the main the Ibo took care to avoid quarrel because it threatened to divide the social body; they strove to keep their collective life as peaceful and satisfying as possible. Achebe makes this clear through these words that he has a village elder speak:

"A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see the moon in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. You may ask why I am saying all this. I say it because I fear for the younger generation, for you people." He waved his arm where most of the young men sat. "As for me, I have only a short while to live, and so have Uchendu and Unachukwu and Emefu. But I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice. And what is the result? An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you, I fear for the clan."

The abominable religion mentioned above is Christianity. We will look at that a little later. The Ibo believed in a high god called Chukwu, the supreme person. The gods ruling over the affairs of the village, to whom the Ibo made sacrifices, were the assistants of Chukwu. The theology of God and demigods is expressed in *Things Fall Apart* by a wise man named Akunna.

"We make sacrifices to the little gods, but when they fail and there is no one else to turn to we go to Chukwu. It is right to do so. We approach a great man through his servants. But when his servants fail to help us, then we go to the last source of hope. We appear to pay greater attention to the little gods but that is not so. We worry them more because we are afraid to worry their Master. Our fathers knew that Chukwu was the Overlord and that is why many of them gave their children the name Chukwuka--'Chukwu is Supreme.'"

Though they depended upon the intercession of God and His servants, the Ibo acknowledged individual free will as a factor necessary for achieving goals. Agbala, priestess of the Oracle, speaks thus:

...when a man is at peace with his gods and his ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm.

The elders of the Ibo understood that life is ultimately suffering. A graybeard named Uchendu says to the young folk of his village:

"You think you are the greatest sufferer in the world. Do you know that men are sometimes banished for life? Do you know that men sometimes lose all their yams and even their children? I had six wives once. I have none now except that young girl who knows not her right from her left. Do you know how many children I have buried--children I begot in my youth and strength? Twenty-two. I did not hang myself, and I am still alive. If you think you are the greatest sufferer in the world ask my daughter, Akueni, how many twins she has borne and thrown away. [The Ibo abandoned newborn twins in the forest to die, as they were considered inauspicious.] Have you not heard the song they sing when a woman dies? "For whom is it well, for whom is it well? There is no one for whom it is well."

"I have nothing more to say to you."

Reincarnation was acknowledged by the Ibo. For example, they feared the *ogbanje*, a soul whose karmic mission is to take birth again and again to the same woman just to die in infancy, bringing that mother repeated grief. We clearly see belief in reincarnation in this speech by one of the *egwugwu*, a group of select persons who ritualistically masquerade as ancestral spirits and are thus possessed by those spirits. This spirit, "One-Handed," spoke thus at the funeral of Ezeudu.

"Ezeudu!" he called in his guttural voice. "If you had been poor in your last life I would have asked you to be rich when you come again. But you were rich. If you had been a coward, I would have asked you to bring courage. But you were a fearless warrior. If you had died young, I would have asked you to get life. But you lived long. So I shall ask you to come again the way you came before."

When addressing ordinary human beings, the *egwugwu* spoke in this manner: "Uzowulu's body, I salute you"; or "The body of the white man, I salute you." This suggests that the Ibo understood that the physical body of a person to whom one speaks is not the actual person. In their dealings with one another human beings tend to forget the distinction between body and soul, but the *egwugwu*, who live on a higher plane of awareness, remind them that they are not their bodies.

As I mentioned earlier, Achebe, while keeping up a strong sympathy for Ibo cultural tradition in his narrative, does not gloss over its failings. While it has much in common with Vedic culture, Ibo tradition as described by Achebe is quite steeped in the quality of *tamo-guna*. It offered no higher level of spirituality than *karma-kanda*-type ritualism, demigod and ghost worship, blood sacrifices, taboos, and clannish superstitions that sometimes resulted in appallingly cruelty.

As an example of the last, Achebe relates a method by which war between two clans was averted. While visiting the village market of another clan, a woman from the village of Umuofia was murdered. The case was settled when the two clans agreed that the young son of one of the men who had a hand in the killing would become the property of Umuofia village. This boy, Ikemefuna, was entrusted to Okonkwo, the main character of *Things Fall Apart*. He grew to adolescence in Okonkwo's household compound and, almost forgetting his own family over the years, came to call the man "my father." Ikemefuna was inseparable from Okonkwo's eldest son, Nwoye, a naturally softhearted boy. Okonkwo was also very attached to Ikemefuna, though it was not his nature to outwardly show affection because he considered that womanly...and he was a strong man. One day Okonkwo was told by the *ndichie*, the village elders, that it was time for Ikemefuna to be killed in sacrificial retribution for

the murder of the daughter of the village. The Oracle of the Caves and the Hills had pronounced it. They asked Okonkwo to lead the boy out among a group of men who had volunteered to do the killing. But Okonkwo was not to take part in the killing because the boy thought of him as his father. And he was not to let the boy know why he was bringing him out among those men who would put him to death. Okonkwo told Ikemefuna the elders decided it was time for the lad to go back to his home village; he and some other men would escort him. In the forest one of the men suddenly struck Ikemefuna down with a machete. The boy fell but was not dead. He cried out to Okonkwo, "Father, they are killing me!" Okonkwo drew his machete and put the boy out of his misery. He had been advised to simply stand by, but at this moment of crisis he felt he had to show the other men that he was not weakened by sentiment and could obey the Oracle without flinching.

Okonkwo's son Nwoye was softhearted but not foolish. He discerned the fate of his dear friend Ikemefuna, and he knew his father had taken part in it. That day something broke inside Nwoye. Years later, when a white Christian missionary began making converts among the Ibo, Nwoye embraced the "abominable religion" wholeheartedly.

The abuse of women and children, the abandonment of newborn twins to their death in the wild, the labeling of some people as *osu* (untouchable) simply because it was willed by a god--these are some of the anomalies of Ibo culture that Achebe links to the success of Christianity among the Ibo people. There were two other factors. One was that Christianity had the colonial government behind it. The other was that with the arrival in the land of the Ibo of the government and Christianity, money came too.

Achebe's look at the clash of two cultures, Western and African, is fascinating. For me to go into that here would mean I would have to summarize in this essay about a third of *Things Fall Apart*, and that's going too far. If you're interested, you should read the book. Why should you be interested? Well, if you are a member or friend of ISKCON, *Things Fall Apart* offers a helpful guide to how deceptive, hypocritical Judaeo-Christian values can undermine a culture not very dissimilar from Vedic culture. Not very dissimilar, but surely not *completely* Vedic either. Vedic means "in knowledge," and it is clear from Achebe's book that the Ibo's main adversary was less Christianity and more their own ignorance.

I do think that there are "Christian missionaries" inside of ISKCON. I'm being facetious, of course, calling them such. They are not Christians, but they are missionaries who do seem to care a great deal about what Christians think about ISKCON. They do seem to desire strongly that ISKCON become "a recognized religion" acceptable to the Christians. And so they promote some of the same values that Achebe shows were instrumental in the destruction of Ibo culture. To the West, Achebe puts the question: what lasting good did your values bring to Africa? His own answer is that African culture, the good and the bad, simply fell apart under the leprous touch of Western "civilization." I hope that the near future will not find a writer surveying the ruins of the institution Srila Prabhupada started in 1966 and then asking ISKCON's own "Christian missionaries" the same question.

But it isn't my intention to point fingers. There's no use of that. Truly Krsna-conscious values can never be threatened by Judaeo-Christian values. Blind justice, self-empowerment, individualism, equality, enforced social welfare for the "deprived

classes", suspicion of all that lies outside the Euro-American comfort zone (as being Satanic!)--we do hear echoes of these values being trumpeted today from some corners of the current ISKCON leadership. But these prized heirlooms of Judaeo-Christianity are deceptive and hypocritical. Just look at how these values are practiced by the Christians themselves. Such ideals represent the hopes for a promised heaven on earth that is cherished by people who are obedient to their senses and minds (when the two Latin words for "sense" and "mind" are combined, we get the basis of the English word *sentimental*). Judaeo-Christian sentiments cannot influence devotees fixed in the sattvic culture of Krsna consciousness. But if devotees are careless and permit the *tamo-guna* to wax in their midst with all its attendant anomalies--and to be sure, we have seen in ISKCON's history horrific cases of child abuse, wife abuse, abuse of power, caste-ism and so on--then things may fall apart for us too.

I titled this essay "It Takes a Village." What I mean by that is that *Things Fall Apart* shows us how Quarrel (the personality of Kali) took over the proud village of Umuofia, the home town of Okonkwo, the main character. But a reader of my essay who is a little aware of current *karmi* culture may detect in its title a reference to a book by Hillary Clinton (wife of the former U.S. president, herself now senator of New York State).

Her book is *It Takes a Village to Raise a Child*. So who cares about Hillary Clinton? At least one of my Godsisters does. She, an outspoken advocate of better treatment for women and children in ISKCON, liked to employ Hillary's title in her own rhetoric. I was in the room when she asked one of the GBC men for Africa where in Africa the proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" comes from.

See, that's what Hillary Clinton claims, that the title of her book is an African proverb. Very ironic that a Western politician would use a reference from African culture to underscore her program of liberalism (which just means politics that are derived from Judaeo-Christian values, those same values by which European colonialists justified saving Africa from the Africans--and thus destroying African culture in the process).

But wait: is "It takes a village to raise a child" *really* an African proverb?

Alexander Chancellor, writing in *New Statesman* of 27 March 1997, observes:

The title of this No 1 American bestseller is taken from what is alleged to be an old African proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child." The First Lady doesn't say what country or region of Africa this saying comes from, but that doesn't matter. Being old and African and a proverb, it suggests the kind of timeless native folk wisdom that most Americans find touching and profound.

But we are in the age of the information superhighway, so it needs bringing up to date. In her introductory chapter, Hillary Clinton explains: "In earlier times and places - and until recently in our own culture - the 'village' meant an actual geographical place where individuals and families lived and worked together."

But isn't that still what it means? Oh, what a silly, old-fashioned idea!

"The horizons of the contemporary village extend well beyond the town line," says Clinton. "From the moment we are born, we are exposed to vast numbers of other people and influences through radio, television, newspapers, books, movies, computers, compact discs, cellular phones, and fax machines. Technology connects us to the impersonal global village it has created."

From the moment we are born, we are not in fact exposed to cellular phones and fax machines, but that is by the way. In the next paragraph she redefines the village yet again: "The village can no longer be defined as a place on a map, or a list of people or organisations, but in essence remains the same: it is the network of values and relationships that support and affect our lives."

Ms Clinton's book, then, really has no intention of advocating an African model of child-raising. She be talking about The Global Electronic Village, and she be talking about The Village of the Modern Mind's Eye. But she sho' 'nuff ain't be talking about no Africa! Still, for an American feminist politician to use an African proverb as the title of her book is certainly a cool career move. How alternative and multicultural. Good for sales! Good for votes! And--like wowwww and far ouu-uuut--it even gets some o' dem ISKCON sistahs up on dat powah to de peeple bandwagon, punchin' they righteous fists inna air. You go, girl--rat own! ISKCON sistahs ain't feggitin' dem fired-up days o' de 1960s! Ho-Ho-Ho-Chi-Minh! Hare-Hare-Hare-Krish-in-*na!*

But again: is "It takes a village..." really an African proverb?

According to www.h-net.msu.edu/~africa/threads/village.html, no, it isn't. Not exactly. The following African proverbs, which appear to come closest to saying "It takes a village...", I've gotten from that website.

In Lunyoro (Banyoro) there is a proverb that says "Omwana takulila nju emoi," whose literal translation is "A child does not grow up only in a single home."

In Kihaya (Bahaya) there is a saying, "Omwana taba womoi," which translates as "A child belongs not to one parent or home."

In Kijita (Wajita) there is a proverb which says "Omwana ni wa bhone," meaning regardless of a child's biological parent(s) its upbringing belongs to the community.

In Kiswahili the proverb "Asiyefunzwa na mamae hufunzwa na ulimwengu" approximates to the same.

All right. Let's be *open-minded* and admit "It takes a village to raise a child" at least *sounds like* these African proverbs. Let's go ahead and accept it as a loose rendition of African folk wisdom. Fine. Just don't get carried away by sentimentalism. Chinua Achebe, himself an African, isn't a sentimentalist. His book, *Things Fall Apart*, show us that besides raising a child, it took a village to murder one, too. And it took a village to spur another one to run away from his father into the arms of Christian missionaries.

I added this postscript 27 April:

After reading "It Takes a Village" again today, I thought I should point out that I wrote this for devotees who have the tendency to latch on to catch-phrases like "It takes a village to raise a child" without really knowing much about where such phrases come from. From somewhere we hear it comes from Africa. We think, "That's cool, because Africa is a non-Western land and thus more 'natural.' The ISKCON mission does emphasize a 'back to nature' solution to many modern problems. So this nice African proverb falls in our playing field. People like it; Hillary Clinton got a lot of mileage from it; it sounds neat; so why not use it in our preaching?" So my point to devotees who tend to think along such lines is: check your sources. In this case, "It takes a village..." isn't really an African proverb. It is similar in meaning to some African sayings, but in this rendering it seems to be a creation of Ms. Clinton...and she's not proposing a "back to nature" solution at all! Moreover, if we examine Mr. Achebe's depiction of child-raising in an African village, we'll realize that merely going back to (material) nature is no solution at all!

Preshov, Slovakia
7 July 2004

Are Academic Scholars like Snakes?

Part Three: The Eternal Enemy

When one forgets his identity in deep sleep, he becomes absorbed in dreams, and he may think himself a different person or may think himself lost. But actually his identity is intact. This concept of being lost is due to false ego, and it continues as long as one is not awakened to the sense of his existence as an eternal servitor of the Lord. The Mayavadi philosophers' concept of becoming one with the Supreme Lord is another symptom of being lost in false ego. One may falsely claim that he is the Supreme Lord, but actually he is not. This is the last snare of *maya's* influence upon the living entity.

--*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.27.15, purport

Devotee 1: One of our friends went to hear Chinmayananda, and he came back to the temple and he said, "Oh, he was speaking very nicely."

Prabhupada: Hm.

Devotee 1: So one of our swamijis said, "What did he say?"

Prabhupada: Hm.

Devotee 1: "I do not know."

Prabhupada: That is the disease.

Devotee 1: Yes.

Devotee 2: They just speak very big words so that the language looks very nice, but people don't understand a word what they are saying.

Prabhupada: (Prabhupada talks meaningless words, imitating the rascals; devotees laugh) They go on speaking like this. And people, "Oh, how amazing!" Simply give some grammatical form and talk all nonsense, people will appreciate. Jugglery. This is called jugglery. The Mayavadi *panditas* also do that.

--Morning walk, Hyderabad 24 April 1974

A mind steeped in Cartesian rationalism, certain that its university-certified powers of analysis are the only means to real knowledge. A mind zealous to unleash this knowledge upon its proper object, the external world, eradicating ignorance in every corner until that mind proudly ascends the shining throne of *maitre et proprietaire de la nature* (Descartes' own words: "master and proprietor of nature"). A mind without a shred of doubt about itself, without the slightest qualm about inner imperfections, mistakes, illusions, self-deceptions, nor about irrational monsters that at any moment may lunge from the murk of the subconscious to wrest control from reason's grasp.

Such is a mind lost in false ego.

A mind that, as it becomes inescapably evident its "knowledge" of the external world is but an assemblage of sensory and mental representations that may have nothing to do with reality at all, decides that if *it* can make no sense of the world, then there *can* be no sense in the world.

Such is a mind lost in false ego.

A mind that discovers an inverse, perverse absolute in senselessness: "I am absolutely free!" For even better than to become master and proprietor of nature is to become the irresponsible enjoyer of nature.

Such is a mind lost in false ego.

A mind that dresses up senselessness with misological rhetoric to appear as wisdom. A mind that, on the basis of that senseless wisdom, denies the existence of an absolute truth. A mind that uses the same misological rhetoric to deviously protect the one absolute it most cherishes: its own freedom.

Such is a mind lost in false ego.

A mind that fears no consequence of its actions due to the "knowledge" gained by rationalism that the field of activities (the world) is mere appearance with no substance; for in the end, the world will dissolve into the absolute senselessness of The Void.

Such is a mind lost in false ego.

Puffed-up Western rationalism is but an introductory phase of *nirvivesa* and *sunyavadi* philosophy, which is characterized by nonsensical relativistic talk. A

Mayavadi, whether dressed like a Hindu *sadhu* or a Western scholar, is dangerous association for a devotee, *especially* when the Mayavadi comes to "discuss" topics of Sri Krsna and His philosophy.

So *avaishnava-mukhodgirna puta-hari-kathamrtam, sravanam na kartavyam*. And it is forbidden, "Don't hear." Why? "*Hari-kathamrta, krsna-katha*, the message of God, the words of God, *Bhagavad-gita*? He may be anything, but the *katha* is the same; so what is the harm to hear from an *avaishnava*?"

Sanatana Gosvami gives the example: *sarpocchistha-payo yatha. Sarpocchista-payo yatha. Sarpocchistha...* Just like milk, everyone knows, a very nice food, most nutritious food, but if it is touched by the life of a serpent, immediately spoiled. Immediately. Another place, Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, *mayavadi-bhasya sunile haya sarva nasa*. If we hear Mayavadi-bhasya, commentaries by the Mayavadis, those who do not accept the Personality of Godhead... They are called Mayavadis. Mayavadi means they see everything *maya*. Even Krsna is *maya*. That is called Mayavadi.

--*Bhagavad-gita* lecture in Ahmedabad, 14 December 1972

Mayavadi philosophy is dangerous because its influence spreads in tandem with the eternal enemy of the soul, lust.

*svagamaih kalpitais tvam ca
jnan mad-vimukhan kuru
mam ca gopaya yena syat
srstir esottarottara*

Addressing Lord Siva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead said, "Please make the general populace averse to Me by imagining your own interpretation of the Vedas. Also, cover Me in such a way that people will take more interest in advancing material civilization just to propagate a population bereft of spiritual knowledge."

--*Padma-Purana* as quoted by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu,
C.c. Madhya 6.181

The phrase, "advancing material civilization just to propagate a population bereft of spiritual knowledge", neatly summarizes modern Western culture. The bodily comforts, the sensual excitants, the mental titillations and diversions provided for by science and technology are stimuli for lust. There's just no denying it: in modern civilization, science and technology are more the servants of sexuality than any other human interest. Thus the largest Internet enterprise by far is pornography. The population born out of such artificially stimulated, wildly exaggerated lust is *varnasankara*, a herd of beasts in human form with practically no inclination to spiritual knowledge.

Predominant in the mentality of such a culture of widespread sense gratification is aversion to the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By such service, the fangs of the serpents of the lusty senses are broken. Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 5.1.17:

The sense organs are certainly our greatest enemies, and they are therefore compared to venomous serpents. However, if a venomous serpent is bereft of its poison fangs, it is no longer fearful. Similarly, if the senses are engaged in the service of the Lord, there is no need to fear their activities. The devotees in the Krsna consciousness movement move within this material world, but because their senses are fully engaged in the service of the Lord, they are always aloof from the material world. They are always living in a transcendental position.

Mayavadi philosophy, whether in Hindu, Buddhist or Western garb, denies that God is a person. Hence He has no senses. The *raison d'être* of engaging our senses in the service of the Lord is that by His mercy we come in contact with His transcendental senses. This is so very evident in Deity worship, for example. By contacting the spiritual senses of the Lord, our material senses, dangerous as serpents, are purified. Their fangs of lust are broken, and we may live in a transcendental position even while carrying on in the material body. But when the heart is darkened by the Mayavadi contamination, service to the Lord is dampened while the fires of sensuality are stoked.

Mayavadi philosophy stimulates lust in another way:

Sukadeva Gosvami concludes this episode of *rasa-lila* by pointing out that if a person hears from the right source of the pastimes of Krsna, who is Visnu Himself, and the *gopis*, who are expansions of His energy, then he will be relieved of the most dangerous type of disease, namely lust. If one actually hears *rasa-lila*, he will become completely freed from the lusty desire of sex life and elevated to the highest level of spiritual understanding. Generally, because they hear from Mayavadis and they themselves are Mayavadis, people become more and more implicated in sex life. The conditioned soul should hear the *rasa-lila* dance from an authorized spiritual master and be trained by him so that he can understand the whole situation; thus one can be elevated to the highest standard of spiritual life, otherwise one will be implicated. Material lust is a kind of heart disease, and to cure the material heart disease of the conditioned soul, it is recommended that one should hear, but not from the impersonalist rascals.

--Krsna, Chapter Thirty-two

The history of Gaudiya Vaisnavism in India has seen the rise of many *apasampradayas* like the Auls, Bauls, Ativadis, Smartas, Sahajiyas, Kartabhajas and so on. All of them are in some way compromised with Mayavadi philosophy. In and around ISKCON in recent decades, different schools of thought and practice have been springing up. The taint of Mayavada can be seen in many; and apropos to the theme of this essay, many--most, I would say--are tainted in particular by the Western scholarly version of Mayavada.

I'll give an example from my own experience. Back in 1971, as a new devotee, I got to know Jamadagni dasa, an intelligent, well-spoken young man with a strong independent streak that kept him in trouble with ISKCON temple leaders. Because he couldn't get along with the authorities, Jamadagni was for years on the move between the different ISKCON centers of North America. By 1975 he was settled in Los Angeles, working in an outside-the-temple business with a Godbrother named Kanupriya dasa. Their professed aim was to preach from within the *karmi* society and

develop *varnasrama-dharma*. The general opinion of the devotees living in the Los Angeles temple was that Jamadagni and Kanupriya were "off."

In June 1975 Srila Prabhupada blessed Los Angeles temple with his divine presence. One day Jamadagni and Kanupriya came for a visit. They were friendly with a liberal ISKCON *sannyasi* who arranged a *darsana* with Srila Prabhupada for them. In the course of the meeting, Jamadagni began speaking to Prabhupada thus:

The statement [in the *Krsna* book] is that King Ugrasena had four billion personal servants. Now, we have gone and tried to spread to the scientific community. And if we say to them, "There was a king whose name was Ugrasena. He had four billion personal servants," they laugh and say, "What did they do for toilets? What did they do for food? Where did they live?"

Prabhupada: So you want to preach this particular portion and no other portion?

Kanupriya: No. We want to... We want to know if the story has an allegorical meaning rather than a literal translation, or that King Ugrasena who was a man who lived five thousand years ago and had four billion bodyguards, or whether the stories within the Bhagavatam, apart from some of them being actual, are allegorical stories. Such as the story of Krsna and Balarama chopping off the the eighty-eight...

Prabhupada: All right. You can give up that portion. You can take other portion.

Kanupriya: But then because so many things they have to accept on faith without knowing, it then weakens their faith as to what they should accept and why should they accept Krsna, who they can't see any more than King Ugrasena's four billion bodyguards.

Prabhupada: Don't accept. Don't accept.

Jamadagni: But we want them to accept. The point is, if we say to a scientific man, "There was four billion," and if our statement is wrong...

Prabhupada: But our position is that if some portion we cannot understand, it is our incapability.

Jamadagni: That is all right. But since we are...

Prabhupada: That's all. Unless we have got this faith we cannot use these Puranas. In the Puranas there are many such statements.

Jamadagni: Yes, but we just want to understand.

Prabhupada: Therefore many people, they do not accept Puranas. So what can be done?

Jamadagni: We're just trying to understand it because we've never dealt with Puranas before. We have been your disciples. But when we present this to the scientific community, because you have said that if one word is wrong, the whole philosophy is wrong, so they will say to us...

Prabhupada: So let them take it and throw out, don't read it. That's all.

Let us pause to consider Jamadagni's angle of approach and Srila Prabhupada's response to it. Jamadagni was clearly speaking from the standpoint of the Cartesian assumption that mathematics and analytical geometry are self-evident truth. (Whether he was speaking for himself personally, or only for the scientific community he mentioned, makes no difference.) From this standpoint the sastric statement that King Ugrasena had four billion bodyguards at Dvaraka is irrational. Srila Prabhupada's reply, "don't accept that portion," is a fit answer to give a Mayavadi. Sripada Sankaracarya's philosophy is known as *aupanisadika-darsana* because the abstruse statements of the Upanisads can be more easily interpreted in an impersonal way than can the Puranas. Therefore, as Srila Prabhupada wrote in a letter of 69-04-02,

The Mayavadis reject the Puranas, but actually the Puranas are supplementary to the four Vedas, the Upanisads and Vedanta. This is confirmed by Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* also is considered amongst the Puranas, but because the subject matter within is purely transcendental, it is called the Maha Purana.

In effect, Prabhupada told Jamadagni, "Being the Mayavadi that you are, you should reject the Srimad-Bhagavata Maha Purana."

Prabhupada: I say you don't believe, you don't take it. Why you are insisting on that point? If you don't believe, you don't take it. If you don't believe the whole book or the whole society, then who forbids you?

Jamadagni: We were hoping that there are some things which can be improved, because they have not been set up by you.

Prabhupada: No. You cannot improve. Whatever we are, we are.

Jamadagni: Why can we not improve it?

Prabhupada: No. There is no possibility.

Jamadagni: Then what is the use of action?

Prabhupada: Action, whatever action we can do by chanting Hare Krsna, that's all.

Jamadagni: But we also have to make *varnasrama* society or farms or businesses.

Prabhupada: That, when we shall do, we shall see to it.

Jamadagni: But we are doing it. We are. [He's referring to the project he and Kanupriya had started.]

Kanupriya: We are doing it now, and that's the question...

Prabhupada: So do it in your own way.

Jamadagni: We don't want to. We want to do everything Krsna's way.

Prabhupada: Stop it. Stop it. I say stop it. You have come to me for my advice. I say you stop it.

Jamadagni: Then, we say, what should we do?

Prabhupada: You should do your business. That's all. Earn money and enjoy.

Jamadagni: No, I mean what should we do Krsna consciously?

Prabhupada: You give up Krsna consciousness, I say. That is my advice.

Jamadagni: Why should we do that?

Prabhupada: Then that I cannot say.

Kanupriya: Isn't there a middle of the road?

Prabhupada: If you are finding so many faults, you give it up.

"Isn't there a middle of the road?"

Isn't there a way to adapt Krsna consciousness to the Cartesian assumption, to evolution, to modern cosmology and atomic theory, to humanistic psychology and social values?

"You should do your business. That's all. Earn money and enjoy. You give up Krsna consciousness. That is my advice."

Soon after that my old friend Jamadagni changed his name to Indra Armstrong. (Before initiation he had been Jeffrey Armstrong.) As he explained, "Srila Prabhupada said if you want to have lots of sex life, you should worship Indra."

Yes, there's something in the Vedas for everyone. But one who can only accept without difficulty an injunction that allows gross sense gratification, and who on the other hand has difficulty accepting Bhagavata philosophy as it is, should not be considered on a high platform of spiritual realization.

*avrtam jnanam etena
jnanino nitya-vairina
kama-rupena kaunteya
duspurenanalena ca*

Thus the wise living entity's pure consciousness becomes covered by his eternal enemy in the form of lust, which is never satisfied and which burns like fire.

--Bhagavad-gita 3.39

Krsna consciousness is not aimed at the end of knowledge in the Cartesian sense. It is aimed at the end of lust, which in turn spells the end of a most profound, inward and deep ignorance that a Cartesian is simply not equipped to deal with. Those who are unwilling to relinquish the Cartesian bias are invited by Srila Prabhupada to follow their path wholeheartedly: give up Krsna consciousness, do your business, earn money and enjoy.

There is no middle of the road. There is no contribution to be taken from the Cartesian standpoint that will improve the Krsna consciousness movement. "But why?" Jamadagni asked Srila Prabhupada repeatedly during the *darsana*.

Prabhupada: You are not following strictly. You cannot ask why.

Jamadagni: We could not ask why when we were following strictly either, Prabhupada. So I'm sorry that it has to be this way.

Prabhupada: No, our thing is that we have got some principles. If anyone cannot follow, then we don't accept him.

Kanupriya: Then what do you do with the rest of the world, except for the few people who...

Prabhupada: So what I can do I am doing. Therefore you have no right to ask me. What is possible by me I am doing. And those who are able to follow, they are following. That's all.

The reason why is that to maintain the Cartesian assumption is to remain in the service of the eternal enemy of the soul, lust. There is no compromise, no middle of the road, in dealing with your worst enemy. He must be defeated. Submissive hearing of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* from the authorized source is, as we have seen above, the means to defeat him. If one is not puffed-up with the Cartesian assumption that anything which is contradicted by "mathematical certainty" is irrational, one can get answers to all "why" questions about this philosophy. Giving up that assumption is equivalent to telling the eternal enemy, "I refuse to serve you any longer."

So, to wind up: are academic scholars like snakes? In as much as they are purveyors of the Cartesian assumption and all the relativistic Mayavadi nonsense that proceeds from it, yes. Because that means they are representatives of the eternal enemy, lust, "which burns like fire." Associate with these walking, talking serpents of the inferno at your own risk!

Timisoara, Romania
12 August 2004

Crucifixion of the Logos

My "Search and Destroy" of Chapter 5 of
Hindu Encounter with Modernity
by Shukavak N. Dasa

Hindu Encounter with Modernity was published five years ago. I purchased a volume at that time but only got through about half of it. No, it is no coincidence that the chapter I am dealing with today is midway through the book. It was after I read this portion that I stopped reading more.

A few days ago I came across this statement--

Waves of Devotion, along with Sukavaka's *Hindu Encounter* were potentially the most effective books that circulated widely within ISKCON for the past few years.

--which was posted to a website that attracts self-proclaimed Gaudiya Vaisnava intellectuals, many of whom are former members of ISKCON. I could not make out what the writer of this post exactly intended by the word "effective." Someone else on that site asked him to explain that, but he did not answer to the point. My guess is, he means something like "effective in provoking the kind of mental speculation that could lead the ISKCON readers of *Hindu Encounter with Modernity* to become like us", i.e. to become self-proclaimed Gaudiya Vaisnava intellectuals formerly of ISKCON. After reading this post, I decided to go back and write something about *Hindu Encounter with Modernity*, in particular Chapter 5 which I believe is the most "effective" of the whole book (again, "effective" according to the outlook of those who flock to the website I am referring to).

Let me establish right away why I titled this essay *Crucifixion of the Logos*. On the same website I found praise of Mel Gibson's recent blockbuster movie *The Passion of the Christ*. You see, not only are the participants of the site self-proclaimed intellectuals, they are self-proclaimed *raganuga-bhaktas*. In the discerning opinion of some of the leaders of this flock of intellectual Gaudiyas, Mel Gibson's film succeeds in immersing its audience in divine *sakhya-rasa*. Well, well, well. I found irony in the fact that St. John (shown in the film following Jesus's torturous way up to Golgotha) declares in his Gospel of the New Testament that Jesus is the logos (the Word of God) incarnate. *The Passion of the Christ* is about one thing: how the intellectuals of Jerusalem, the scribes and the Pharisees, conspired to have the word of God incarnate scourged and hung to die upon the cross.

Let us see what this has to do with Chapter 5 of *Hindu Encounter with Modernity*.

The chapter, covering pages 119 to 151, is entitled "Reason and Religious Faith". It is divided into sections with headings like "A Crisis in Faith", "The Rationalism of Bankim Candra", "Bhaktivinoda and British Orientalism", "Three Kinds of Spiritual Seekers", and "Two Modes of Religious Understanding". The focus of the chapter is a work by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura called *Sri Krsna-samhita*, which he wrote in 1879. Shukavak N. Dasa explains that Srila Bhaktivinoda wrote this book for the *bhadraloka*, the educated class of Bengal which in the nineteenth century was

steeped in rationalism and thus was disinclined to a simple, faithful approach to religious topics. The Thakura's purpose was to explain Krsna to the *bhadraloka* according to *adhunika-vada*, "the modern approach" which incorporated ideas from British Orientalism (the forerunner of what is known today as Indology).

My comment at this point is that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura undertook a very grave mission of mercy in writing *Sri Krsna-samhita*. His transcendental son, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, used to say, *Vaisnava saralata atva*, "the essence of a Vaisnava is simplicity." The *bhadraloka* of the nineteenth century had strayed very far from that essence. *Sadhu guru mahajana patita-pavana kapata-pavava noi*, it is said: "The *sadhus*, the spiritual master, and great personalities like Lords Gaura-Nitai, come to deliver the fallen, yet they are not deliverers of crooked (*kapatya*) persons." The word *kapatya* is an opposite of the word *saralata* (simple). Thus it means "to make unnecessarily complicated." In this way the *bhadraloka* of Bhaktivinoda Thakura's time had become worse than fallen. Due to imbibing foreign ideas, these sophisticated upper-class Bengalis had become too crooked in their thinking. Anything religious, any item of simple faith, they felt obliged to deconstruct and reassemble according to the zigs and the zags of prevailing rationalist-materialist speculations. It was beneath their station, so they believed, to simply accept religion "as it is." That was for the villagers to do, not the sophisticates. Seeing the *bhadraloka* so shut off from the mercy of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura compassionately composed his *Sri Krsna-samhita* for their deliverance.

On page 136 of Chapter 5, Shukavak summarizes:

In other words, Bhaktivinoda is saying: My fellow *bhadraloka*, your minds are trained to accept the conclusions of rational analysis fashioned with the tools of modern scholarship, so we shall employ these tools to examine our religious traditions.

On page 128 he characterizes rational analysis a crude tool. On page 140 he points out that by today's scholarly standards the historiography Bhaktivinoda Thakura used to make the Hindu religious tradition seem rational to the *bhadraloka* is completely out of date.

So far I have no objection.

But then in the section subheaded "Two Modes of Religious Understanding", Shukavak trots out an argument that the *adhunika-vada* (the modern approach) is to be employed today.

The *Krsna-samhita* is as much a statement about the relationship between reason and religious faith as it is a study of the life of Sri Krsna and a summary of India's religious history. It is Bhaktivinoda's unique blend of these components that gives his synthesis of modernity and tradition *its extraordinary utility even today*, perhaps also beyond the realm of Caitanya Vaisnavism.

[From page 146; I have italicized the phrase "its extraordinary utility..." to emphasize the author's intent.]

If ever there was one, this is a logical *non sequitur*. It is admitted that 125 years ago Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura wrote a book he aimed at a specific section of people. Obviously, this section of people is no longer with us. Nor is the specific form of rationalism still with us that this section embraced. Rational analysis in general is admitted to be a crude tool. Yet suddenly--tah dah!--the synthesis of modern rationalism and ancient tradition is proclaimed to have extraordinary utility even today.

Who says?

Is it that Shukavak can say this because he is a learned disciple of Srila Prabhupada who took the trouble to earn a PhD at a Western university?

Although one may be well versed in the transcendental science, one should be careful about the offense of *maryada-vyatikrama*, or impertinently surpassing a greater personality. According to scriptural injunction one should be very careful of transgressing the law of *maryada-vyatikrama* because by so doing one loses his duration of life, his opulence, fame and piety and the blessings of all the world.

[*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.4.26p]

The offense so described is relevant here for the reason that unless Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura can be shown to have specifically requested his disciples, grand-disciples, and great-grand-disciples to synthesize modernity with scriptural tradition, then one who claims he is authorized to do so by the Thakura's writings is being impertinent. Certainly we get from Srila Prabhupada no green light for adjusting *sastra* to the theories of modern scholarship. But Prabhupada, in the opinion of the intellectual crowd, is way too conservative.

So then let's take a step back in the *parampara*, to Srila Bhaktisiddhanata Sarasvati Thakura. From birth he was trained in Krsna consciousness by Srila Bhaktivinoda. About those who synthesize modern theories with the *sastric* tradition, he has this to say.

The writings of Thakura Bhaktivinoda provided the golden bridge by which the mental speculationists can safely cross the raging waters of fruitless empiric controversies that trouble the peace of those who choose to trust in their guidance for finding the truth. As soon as the sympathetic reader is in position to appreciate the sterling quality of Thakura Bhaktivinoda's philosophy, the entire vista of the revealed literature of the world will automatically open out to his reclaimed vision.

There have, however, already arisen serious misunderstandings regarding the proper interpretation of the life and teachings of Srila Thakura Bhaktivinoda. Those who suppose they understand the meaning of his message without securing the guiding grace of the acharya are disposed to unduly favor the method of empiric study of his writings. There are persons who have got by heart almost everything that he wrote without being able to catch the least particle of his meaning. Such study cannot benefit those who are not prepared to act up to the instructions lucidly conveyed by his words. There is no honest chance of missing the warnings of Thakura Bhaktivinoda. Those, therefore, who are misled by the perusal of his writings are led astray by their own obstinate perversity in sticking to the empiric course which they

prefer to cherish against his explicit warnings. Let these unfortunate persons look more carefully into their own hearts for the cause of their misfortunes.

[For the entire essay of Srila Sarasvati Thakura, see [In2-MeC 20 June](#)]

Shukavak argues his conviction on pages 140-142. He *is* authorized by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura to pursue the rational-empirical approach to *sastra*. "In fact, on two separate occasions he [Bhaktivinoda] encourages subsequent intellectuals to continue the study of Vedic history and geography using the *adhunika-vada*." Two untranslated Bengali citations are given in a footnote.

Wow. With these two Bengali sentences, we see the Thakura as, like, *reaching across space and time*, and *right over the guru-parampara in between*, to a Western-educated devotee of year 2004, authorizing him or her to engage in (I quote Shukavak on page 145) "human speculation and interpretation."

Of course, we have to take careful note that this allowance from the Thakura is specifically for *intellectuals*. Well, how do you know if you are an intellectual? Don't worry. It doesn't seem to be too difficult a thing to join the club. Consider again the self-proclaimed intellectuals on that website I referred to earlier. From the stories some of these fellows tell about themselves, it seems that to realize oneself an intellectual, one needs only to abandon the order of one's *guru* (even if the *guru* is Srila Prabhupada) and to go shopping for whatever "truths" can be gleaned from different *sadhus* (and so-called *sadhus*) of different traditions, from different texts--both scriptural and academic--and from different kinds of speculation: rational, empirical, historical, academic, hypnagogic, hallucinogenic, whatever floats your boat, man. Yeah, to be an intellectual, main thing is you gotta be *different* (*nasau muni yasya matam na bhinnam*).

You know--you gotta be like the *bhadraloka* in Bhaktivinoda's time.

Ergo, the same *bhadraloka* Srila Bhaktivinoda was trying to save by writing *Sri Krsna-samhita*, he wants devotees of the present time to become like. Yes indeed, the Thakura wants *you* to be puffed-up from the vantage point of material knowledge, and to look down from there upon the simple faith of the ordinary "village devotees", those who don't have the vision and gumption to be different. On pages 140-142 of Chapter 5, Shukavak describes an encounter he had with a devotee, his own Godbrother I suppose, who was pained to hear Shukavak's arguments. Shukavak classifies this devotee as a *komala-sraddha*, a neophyte with tender faith.

Neat formula for becoming advanced, right? Say something outrageous in the assembly of devotees: "Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura stated the *Bhagavatam* may only be 1000 years old, not 5000 years as the *Bhagavatam* itself claims" or "the Thakura adapted the *Dasavataras* to Darwin's theory of evolution" or "modern science has disproved the *Bhagavatam* atomic theory" or "even though Srila Prabhupada disapproved it, I have authorization from Bhaktivinoda Thakura to speculate in these ways." Then when devotees react by questioning "how I could make such a presentation" and by accusing you "of disturbing the spiritual peace" (to cite two of Shukavak's own phrases from page 141), you can prance and preen, glorying in the satisfaction of having proved yourself more sophisticated than the rabble.

To be fair to Shukavak, he does say that there is *paramartha* (transcendental) knowledge in the *sastra* that is not subject to human revision. It's just the history and geography of the *sastra* that are legitimate targets of rational scrutiny. But in an instant the mind come up with problems that call into question where such a dividing line ought to be drawn. Some people argue, for example, that the Krsna of the geographic region of Vrndavana is a historically different person from the Krsna of the geographic Mathura, and that the Krsna of Dvaraka is yet a third personality.

If that is so, then is the *Bhagavad-gita* really a bona fide scripture, since it was spoken by a different Krsna from Vrndavana Krsna?

Where does temporal knowledge (of history and geography) end and eternal spiritual knowledge begin?

Oh, that we have to *discuss*. And that's why intellectuals are important--to help us keep these discussions going *ad infinitum*.

That we take part in this discussions *ad infinitum* is, according to Shukavak, the true test of our religious faith. In a footnote on page 149, he writes:

The distinction between religious faith and belief can also be shown to exist outside the religious field. In philosophy, for example, it is not what a philosopher believes that makes him a philosopher, but rather the individual's faith in philosophy, out of which the beliefs, the particular philosophies, are produced and sustained. The same can be said about science. A person is a scientist because of his faith in science, in the spirit of science, and not because of his beliefs in the particular theorems, which unquestionably come and go.

Ergo, a devotee is a devotee because of his abiding faith in the spirit of *bhakti*, whatever outward form it may take from moment to moment. A devotee is not a devotee because of his belief or participation in any particular item or practice of *bhakti*. Such particularities unquestionably come and go.

"Gee Mom, that sounds like Mayavadi philosophy to me!"

"Hush, Junior, you're just a child. You can't understand these things!"

Shukavak's claim is that his model of what *bhakti* really is can be applied in other fields. OK, let's see how it would work in household life. Husband to wife: "Dear, I believe in marriage. Therefore I am a husband. It has nothing to do with you in particular. You are my wife right now, true, but tomorrow you could go. That wouldn't change my faith in the ongoing institution of marriage." Wife to husband: "Well, if that's the way you feel, then the ongoing institution of marriage can fix your dinner tonight."

Like, maybe the intellectuals will one day conclude from their discussions that the *Bhagavad-gita* is a myth. OK, but if you are a real devotee you will go on having faith in *something* Krsna taught, maybe not that particular text, but whatever text the intellectuals deem valid at the moment.

This is supposed to be reasonable?

Actually, what Shukadeva writes about philosophers and scientists as being faithful servants of the professional fields of philosophy and science can quickly be shown to be garbage. That is especially seen to be so when the revolutionaries of these fields are brought under consideration. Karl Marx is certainly an influential philosopher. But as a revolutionary who broke with the ongoing discussions of other philosophers, he famously asserted, "Philosophers have tried to explain the world. The point is to change it." Einstein, a revolutionary scientist, asserted, "I don't believe in mathematics." Einstein was well-known for not much caring if his discoveries were approved by the discussions of the scientific establishment. Until his theory of relativity triumphed over classical physics, he was an outcaste.

Take careful note that Shukavak is arguing from his own personal bias, which is that of the professional academician. Such fellows keep faith in the professions of being philosophers, scientists and religious scholars because *that's how they earn their bread*. Is it these fellows who make a difference in history? Hardly.

It's the revolutionaries who *break with plodding tradition* that change history. Of course, at this point I am only talking of famous philosophers and scientists, people still in mundane consciousness. When we turn to religion, we find the biggest revolutionaries are the transcendentalists. Like Lord Jesus Christ.



Christ was certainly no professional religionist. He was not interested in the ongoing discussions of the professional religionists of his time, the scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem. One of the big issues of their discussions was the coming of the awaited Messiah. At the time the scribes and the Pharisees judged Jesus, he plainly and simply--

without resorting to historical and other rational justifications--declared himself the Messiah, the word of God made flesh. For this he was *voted* by the *intellectuals* to be crucified.

I'm not running down intellectuals here, i.e. people who are thoughtful. I am a thoughtful person myself. But when intellectual people adopt a bias like scepticism, empiricism or rationalism, and from that mundane standpoint try to analyze the eternal truth, they become dangerous. More so when they sit together on a panel of power and influence and cast votes. They really do think that their collegial process of discussion and voting ensures justice. But the world-shaking events in Jerusalem some 2000 years ago amply demonstrated that a panel of bent-headed intellectuals is quite capable of making a colossal error of judgement.

Christ had already walked upon water, fed the multitudes with only two loaves, healed the sick with his touch, cast devils out of the insane, and raised the dead. It was the most despicable kind of arrogance for the scribes and Pharisees, who had no power to perform such wondrous feats (in fact, being rationalists, they didn't even believe they could be done), to judge Jesus under their petty rules of reasoning, historiography and other such wooden concepts born of wooden heads and hearts.

Today's would-be Gaudiya intellectuals, who seek in Bhaktivinoda Thakura a justification for their crucifixion of *sastra* on the cross of dead, wooden reasoning, have no power to perform even a fraction of the wonderful service to Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu that the Thakura did. Create a movement of pure *sankirtana* that attracted the leaders of society? "Sorry, no can do." Write dozens of books and hundreds of songs of pure devotion to Krsna? "Sorry, no can do." Establish temples at important sites of the Lord's pastimes? "Sorry, no can do." Raise a pure devotee son to carry on the mission of Krsna consciousness to the whole world? "Sorry, no can do." Interpret scripture in a novel way--"Yes! YES! *That* we can do!"--wait! in order to usher jaded pseudo-intellectuals beyond their anti-religious prejudices to the exclusive shelter of the lotus feet of Krsna?

"Well, the first part about interpreting scripture in a novel way sounded good. Let's forget about the rest."

These fellows can't make a difference in the world. They are not revolutionaries, they are simply timeclock-punching wage-earners. Yet want to interpret *sastra* differently, as per their useless, impotent speculations, as if *that* was revolutionary. Challenge them and they often morph into the tragic persona of a persecuted saint. "Christ you know it ain't easy," sang John Lennon about those who criticized his outrageous behavior before the public eye, "you know how hard it can be. The way things are goin', They're gonna crucify me!"

But *I* won't call these guys *sudras*. Prabhupada already did that:

The title Ph.D. can also be interpreted as Plough Department, a title meant for the tillers in the paddy field. The attempt of the tillers in the paddy field to understand the cosmic manifestation and the cause behind such wonderful work can be compared to the endeavor of the frog in the well to calculate the measurement of the Pacific Ocean.

[*Bhag.* 3.6.10p]

SB 1.2.12

*tac chraddadhana munayo jnana-vairagya-yuktaya
pasyanty atmani catmana bhaktya sruta-grhitaya*

The seriously inquisitive student or sage, well equipped with knowledge and detachment, realizes that Absolute Truth by rendering devotional service in terms of what he has heard from the *Vedanta-sruti*.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura:

Translation: The sages, or the chanters of the holy name (*kirtan-kari-gon*), endowed with firm faith in the transcendental truth, who have, by hearing from the scriptures, accumulated auspicious activities (*sukrti*) and attained the knowledge of the relationships (*sambandha*), and who are free from enjoying or renouncing the sense

objects can, as a result of their service, constantly see in their pure hearts this Absolute Truth in the form of Paramatma.

Explanation: When the sages become fixed in *bhakti* in the form of faith in the transcendental worship of the Lord, brought about by refraining from studies of what is Brahman as well as renouncing the instant enjoyment of the fruits of one's activities or, in other words, giving up everything which is not connected with Krsna - which are concomitant factors of devotion to the Lord -, and when they thus take to devotional service based on hearing and reject any reasoning that is not supported by hearing, then they can see both Paramatma and Brahman in the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Those who are without *bhakti* and follow the path of logic and reasoning, cannot see Paramatma and Brahman in the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Because of their lack of *bhakti* they are lacking in knowledge and renunciation and they have no faith. Therefore they are Mayavadis. Where there is a lack of knowledge and renunciation, there is unsteadiness and no faith in the service to the Supreme Person. The process of serving the worshipable object is a path based on hearing. Situated on this path of *bhakti*, the pure living entity knows himself to be a devotee of the Lord, and he is constantly serving the Lord in his heart. The heart of a nondevotee is just a ground downtrodden by the enjoyments of the external world. The devotee's heart is a site of the eternal variegated pastimes of Krsna in Vrndavana. The nondevotee's heart is full of thoughts about the perishable or ever-changing external world. Since it is bound by the enjoyment of sense objects or of perishable truths, there is no faith there in one's own eternal form (*svarupa*) dedicated to serving the Lord. Karmis and Mayavadis, being devoid of the knowledge of the Absolute Truth, are busy with enjoying or renouncing; one can see many kinds of nondevotees attached to sense enjoyment or giving it up. They are deprived of the eternal mellows of exchanges between the servant and the served. These can be understood by the disciple who has achieved the mercy of his spiritual master, a devotee on the path based on hearing, engaged in chanting the holy name, whereas the mundane nondevotees, bewildered by the false ego, will never understand them.

[Translated by Punya-palaka Prabhu of ISKCON Prague]

Click on this web address. Be patient, it takes a little while to download.

<http://www.bullguard.com/about/movies/badkarma.aspx>

Prague, Czech Republic 16 August 2004

On Saturday morning, Murari Krsna Prabhu drove me from Timisoara across Hungary to the Hungarian-Slovakian border. Saturday afternoon Raghunatha-priya Prabhu picked me up and drove me to Bratislava, capital of Slovakia. I stayed overnight in his apartment and gave the Sunday feast program in Govinda's restaurant in the city center. After that Raghunatha-priya drove me to Prague.

I am here to pick up a visa for the Ukraine. It's been a rather involved process this year to get that done. I applied for it over a month ago. This afternoon, I'm *supposed* to get this visa finally stamped into my passport. We'll see.

I'm not planning to stay in Prague long...in a couple days I should be off to Wroclaw, Poland. This weekend I am to take part in a Polish Yatra Festival at New Santipur, the ISKCON farm which is outside of Wroclaw. On Monday 23rd, if all has gone well with my visa today, I am to fly to Odessa in the Ukraine to take part in the yearly yatra festival there.

Let me share with my In2-MeC readers some emails I've received lately about HH Bhakti-tirtha Maharaja's health. The news is not pleasant. The GBC and his disciples request devotees everywhere to pray for their spiritual master's welfare; I hope the readers of In2-MeC will not fail to do so. HH Bhakti-tirtha Maharaja is my old friend from the BBT Library days. It is very painful for me to read of his health problems. But since his life is fully in Krsna's hands, I know that whatever happens, it is for the transcendental best. He is a great soul, situated above the distresses of the material body, so we should be confident that he is not really suffering.

Dear Maharajas and Prabhus

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

I spoke this morning with HH BT Swami, and I have some unfortunate news from him. He discovered yesterday that he has Melanoma cancer. His tumor was very large, larger than they expected. The doctor suspected cancer, and then they confirmed it, and gave him the news yesterday. The doctor suspects that it has spread to other parts of his body. The cancer seems to be at an advanced stage. By material standards, they would give him a less than 50% chance of survival, even as low as 17-19%. But by Krsna's grace he can recover.

He is undergoing tests today, to see if indeed it has spread to other areas. He said that he has felt some gurgling sensation in his lungs, and some pain in his groin area, which are typical areas attacked by this cancer. We should know by tomorrow. Based on that information, he will decide what to do next. It is unusual that melanoma attacks black-bodied persons.

He feels a bit discouraged that his main means of association and interchange with vaisnavas, which is dancing, will most probably be permanently affected.

I told him that all of us will be praying for his recovery, and he asked me to post this on the GBC conference. Since he has made put much emphasis on prayer in his lectures and writings, we should all prayer ardently for his quick recovery.

Your servant,

Guru Prasad Swami

Below is a summary of Saturdays class that Maharaja gave. its written by youth devotee in this area--Gaura Vani Dasi--So far I haven't seen anything written about the class (I may have missed some emails though--so sorry if this info has been already summarized) so I thought it best to send this over now--to Gaura Dasi--if you are on this list, I hope its ok I forwarded this email over.

Haribol everyone,

Bhakti Tirtha Maharaja gave a darshan this morning at the preaching center in Silver Spring, Maryland. I was scheduled to work today, so I went over intending to stay for a little while then go off to my job. I got there in the middle of guru-puja and it was too much to leave. Too important to step away from. After guru-puja, we assembled in his room upstairs. It was tight, maybe 40 devotees sitting and standing close together. About 15 more arrived over the course of the morning.

He started with singing Jaya Radha Madhava. Many of us were crying. Next, he gave us the medical rundown. The melanoma cancer is in stage 4, which is pretty high. The test results were given to another doctor and she said it was at the very least stage 4. The chance for survival is 7-19% at this level, this intensity. He's known about the tumor for about 20 years. They decided not to operate at that time because he would've lost most of the function of the left foot. Ten years ago there was a biopsy. Results said it was benign.

In Mayapur this spring, he started to feel some pain. Then swelling, more pain. He couldn't attend Detroit Rathayatra as a result. He sat on Jagannatha's cart for Gita Nagari Rathayatra. Normally he's the dancing dervish, as some of you well know. He then shared some themes from his 2004 Vyasa Puja offering to Srila Prabhupada. He saw so much suffering in the secular world and in ISKCON; broken marriages, abused children, devotees losing faith, leaders not being accountable, etc.

So he prayed to be an instrument for Krsna and Srila Prabhupada, to take on the suffering of others so they could be more purified, take on whatever is necessary to make a change in the society.

He emphasized how it's up to Krsna and Prabhupada. How he wants to be an instrument for change however that may take shape. He said "How can I continue living so well, travelling, taken care of in each place I visit, giving classes and seminars, etc, when we have devotees on welfare, who are losing faith, when some of our children leave and are upset and hurting, if I can lessen their pain so they can grow, let me take it."

He shared how he doesn't want the devotees to pray for him to stay, he wants them to pray to Krsna and Prabhupada to allow him to serve in the best possible way, be it leaving, staying, whatever. He smiled and laughed a few times, in that particular way of his, with his shoulders shaking a little and his head back.

Then came questions. This is a summary of a few questions. "Can you direct us (his disciples) where to go for siksa when you go, whenever that may occur?"

Reply: "That's a highly individual thing. There are many who are qualified; maybe an older godbrother, godsister, anyone. Better if you can receive guidance and help

from many sources. Krsna can come in so many ways. It's not just you and your guru."

"How can we balance between the urgent necessity of practicing KC day to day and also dealing with everything else; job, family, business of living, etc.?"

Reply: "The two are not separate. We can adopt the mood of the paramour, who takes great care to make everything alright and nice with the husband but who also loves and cares for her beloved. Otherwise we can become schizophrenic, split. Take care of both."

In relation to this question, I've heard him say in the past that we need to take care of it all otherwise it's a problem. For example, make laxmi so you don't have to worry about laxmi. He was optimistic, with both a somber demeanor and then smiling and laughing a few times.

We are trying to get a transcription to share. Perhaps an audio weblink too.

your servant,

Gaura Vani dasi

You may recall that in In2-MeC of 17 July, I wrote about a Godbrother named Jamadagni das. I told how he changed his name to Indra Armstrong. Well, within the last couple of days I have discovered that he is featured in a short video interview that is part of a "mockumentary" film called *Nothing So Strange*. Here is a screenshot of old Indrajai talking to the camera:



A search of the Internet reveals that he apparently is a representative of a Los Angeles show business agency. I came up with this address:

Agency West Entertainment
Indra Armstrong
6255 West Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90028
(323) 468-9470

I guess it's because his professional involvement in the LA entertainment industry that he took part in the film *Nothing So Strange*.

I found this movie quite interesting. It fits with the theme of "truth" that I've been writing about repeatedly in In2-MeC. I don't think *Nothing So Strange* has had much play-time in cinemas, if any at all. But it is downloadable from the Internet. Here are some relevant web addresses from the credits at the end of the movie:



As I mentioned earlier, *Nothing So Strange* is a "mockumentary." This is a film genre that has become more noticeable since *The Blair Witch Project*, which you may have heard of. The *Blair Witch Project* was a big hit in the latter 1990s. It was a cheapo horror flick made to look like a real documentary report about a haunted forest. Since *Blair Witch*, a movie that pretends to be a true-life documentary but is really a fictional drama is called a mockumentary.

The title of *Nothing So Strange* is taken from a statement attributed to Daniel Webster in 1830: "There is nothing so powerful as truth, and often nothing so strange." The film purports to follow the development of a grassroots movement in Los Angeles called Citizens for Truth. This movement came about in the wake of the assassination of the multi-billionaire founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates, in 1999. Oh, you didn't know that the world's richest man was killed by a rifleman during a public appearance in L.A.? Well, *Nothing So Strange* has video footage to prove it!



Citizens for Truth claims that there was a governmental cover-up as to what really happened that day. The official story is that a sniper named Alek Hidell gunned Gates down from a vantage point on top of a hotel. (Alek Hidell was an alias that Lee Harvey Oswald used.) Within minutes after Gates was shot, the LAPD killed Hidell as he was trying to flee the hotel. But Citizens for Truth is sure that Hidell is innocent and that somebody else--"the Running Man" caught on a short video clip by a bystander--is the actual assassin.



Nothing So Strange is a very postmodern look at the problems of establishing anything with certainty in today's world of information technology. Although what I've described of the plot sounds preposterous, the movie presents itself with complete seriousness. In fact I am sure that if your average ISKCON devotee, typically not very well-informed about current events, would watch *Nothing So Strange*, he or she would think the film is really what it purports to be. "Wow, I didn't know Bill Gates was assassinated!" That's the irony at the heart of the film: it examines with in-depth forensic care the "truth" of an event that never happened!

Here's the credit the film gives to Indra Armstrong at the end:



Back in the early '70's, Jamadagni was a good friend of mine. While I do not condone his confrontation with Srila Prabhupada--which I described on July 17--I'm glad to see that he's at least doing something of note in the material world. *Nothing So Strange* is a quite educational look at the grave difficulties faced by those who try to arrive at the truth by sense inspection, reconstructive speculation, and argumentative discussion. As I watched the Citizens of Truth meet to discuss the Bill Gates assassination, I repeatedly thought to myself, "Hey, this film should be shown to the GBC at the start of the next Mayapur meeting."

Prague, Czech Republic 17 August 2004

To complete what I mentioned here yesterday about my waiting in Prague for a Ukrainian visa, I did receive it--a visa good for 3 years, in fact. Tomorrow I am scheduled to depart Prague for Wroclaw, Poland.

Yesterday, quite astonishingly, I received the following letter from an old friend. My replies to specific points are interspersed in italics through the body of his text.

Dear Suhotra Swami,

Hare Krishna!

Your web site has recently come to my attention. It is great to see you are working toward Spiritual goals and attempting to clarify the Vedic teachings we were given by Srila Prabhupada.

Thank you very much. I am really quite thrilled to get this email from you after so many years of no contact at all. I believe the last time I saw you was in 1976. I hope that by Krsna's grace life is treating you nicely.

In your version of the conversation which took place between myself and Srila Prabhupada, there are several inaccuracies and the conversation is not in its correct context. I have never been a Cartesian or Mayavada since being properly instructed by our guru.

Well, the text of the conversation quoted in my website I copied from the Vedabase. I have also listened to the audio tape several times. So I don't know of any inaccuracies in the source material. It is true that I did not reproduce the entire recorded conversation, only the parts that illustrate the theme of the essay presented on my website on 7 July of this year. I am happy to read your assertion that disassociates you from Cartesianism and Mayavada. I accept what you say. In that connection I beg forgiveness for being hard on you in my essay. As I will explain a bit later, I still believe that there is a philosophical lesson to be learned about Cartesianism and Mayavada from that conversation.

The real issue of the conversation was the misuse of power in certain areas of ISKCON at the time of the conversation and more specifically the dangerous idea that the administrative leaders of the movement had infalible spiritual authority, an idea that was quite widespread in those days. As young men in a new and difficult social environment, it was difficult to raise those social issues and Srila Prabhupada was not very accesible due to his many duties and translating.

In retrospect I would not have have raised the question of the unusual statements that occur in the puranas, since it is a separate issue relating to taking all scriptural statements as literally true on the same level with each other. It is probable that there is a coded meaning to the idea of 4 billion servants, for example. The real point of that part of the conversation was to elicit a comment on levels of meaning in the scripture, not to imply an invalidation of the important truths by detail or inconsistencies. If I could ask the same questions now they would not seem so awkward.

This clarification you offer is valid. I can see, when looking at the entire transcript of the conversation, that the main issue was the anomalies evident in some ISKCON leaders of that particular time. But as you have admitted above, the quotations I used--which were rather lengthy in themselves--are illustrative of a separate, purely philosophical issue. This, the issue of how reason is to be employed to properly understand difficult statements of sastra, was the heart of July 7's essay published on my website. Now, Srila Prabhupada more than once would use a disciple as a "foil" in philosophical discussions. There's the well-known example of his challenging his very loyal disciple Svarupa Damodara, to the extent of addressing him "rascal scientist" just to get a good argument back that he could dismantle for everyone's edification. Therefore I stand firm on my take of the philosophical significance of Srila Prabhupada's reply to your questions about scripture. As our Godbrother Tejiyas Prabhu told me not long ago, "Srila Prabhupada was teaching us by everything he said and did." So we learn from this conversation you had with His Divine Grace about the hard-core Cartesian/Mayavadi approach to sastra, and how to respond to it. It is not necessary to conclude that you personally are a hard-core Cartesian/Mayavadi. Just as we ought not conclude from Prabhupada's discussions with Svarupa Damodara that the latter is personally a rascal scientist.

The truth is, Prabhupada had been misinformed by his other disciples on our intentions for even having the meeting so it started out on a bad note. Speaking only

for myself I can tell you that prior to that meeting I had spent 5 years in the ashram serving exactly as we were taught, at the expected level of moral purity and commitment. By the time of this meeting I was living outside the temple in an attempt to find a career and eventually a wife, both of which I did. More to the point, my questions to our guru had to do with abuses of power and authority I had seen within the movement, most of which are now history but at the time were more hidden. They concerned me deeply at that time, though there was never a time that the imperfect actions of my god brothers (or myself) turned me away from our personalist teachings or practises which I have continued for the last 35 years.

Fair enough. My little comment (please don't take it as a retort) is that had I been the one to speak to Srila Prabhupada at this time instead of you, I would not have gone about it the same way. But that is obvious because we are different persons. It does not mean I am a "better" disciple than you. Humbly folding my hands, I ask you to simply take note of the fact that when I hear the tape, I get a little queasy at the tone of voice you and Kanupriya das used in His Divine Grace's presence. Anyway, I'm not arguing. The reasons you've given for why the conversation happened as it did are in order, especially for one (like me) who was aware of some of the strange things going on in ISKCON then.

All of these issues were much more problematic and perplexing at that time than they probably are now. I appreciate that you viewed the conversation as an attack on both our Guru and Krishna consciousness and are defending both but in fact the conversation arose from a similar concern for the well being of our movement and a desire to serve our mutual guru. I would appreciate you taking the time to review this account since you have chosen to publish it, in the interest of fairness it would be nice if you could take the time to discuss it with me.

I hope this finds you well in the service of the Divine couple and our guru's mission

Respectfully

Jamadagneya (the correct spelling)

Dear Jamadagneya Prabhu, I hope you don't mind that the discussion you asked to have with me has taken the form of my publishing your letter on my website along with these remarks of mine. I'm a bit challenged at the moment with the travel schedule I have in front of me, so this is the least complicated way for me to handle the issue. I believe it is the fair way to go. All visitors to In2-MeC can see directly what your standpoint is. For me it is very good news to know that you've remained a follower of Srila Prabhupada to this day. I want all my readers to know that personally I have only fond memories of you. I was not in LA when you and Kanupriya had your meeting with His Divine Grace, nor did I talk with you about the meeting afterward--in fact you and I have not spoken for some 28 years. I know only what is taped and transcribed. So forgive me, please, for my mistake in concluding from the source material that you had become an opponent of Srila Prabhupada. As is evident from yesterday's In2-MeC entry, which I composed before I read your email, I have been quite excited in the last couple of days by the discovery of your small role in an interesting film, Nothing So Strange. You seem to be doing well, and as an old friend I am happy for you.

From the Internet:

Anarchists' Convention Debates Voting

ATHENS, Ohio--A group of anarchists is taking an unusual step to make its political voice heard—going to the polls.

Anarchists generally pride themselves on their rejection of government and its authority. But a faction of them fed up with the war in Iraq say they plan to cast anti-Bush votes this fall.

The voting debate was just one of the topics explored at the three-day North American Anarchist Convergence, which brought about 175 participants to Ohio University.

Some attendees rejected the voting proposal.

"Ultimately, those who are voting are either bad anarchists or not anarchists at all," said Lawrence, a "Californian in his mid-40s" who declined to give his last name. "No one can represent my interests. We reject political professionals."

Others said they are embracing their right to engage in the political process, and plan to vote for John Kerry, Ralph Nader or anyone who can underscore their opposition to the Bush administration.

Susan Heitker, 32, of Athens, believes that the U.S. government is neither legitimate nor democratic, but she still plans to vote.

"To me, at least, it's important to vote," she said. "There was a time when I was not going to vote, but I really dislike Bush."

Howard Ehrlich, of Baltimore, also embraces his right to "engage the political system."

"I will certainly vote against George Bush because he is leading the nation to further violence and eroding civil liberties," said Ehrlich, who is editor of *Social Anarchism*, a 3,000-circulation magazine.

What's interesting about anarchism from the Krsna conscious perspective is that it is a form of idealistic negationism, like Mayavadi philosophy. Even though he may try to deny it, a strict anarchist is defined by what he is against, not what he is for. As you can plainly see from the above news report, as soon as some anarchists came out *for* voting in the upcoming US election, other anarchists were denouncing them as bad anarchists or no anarchists at all.

On an anarchist website, I found the following attempt by an anarchist to refute the idea that anarchists are only "anti" and never "pro".

Is anarchism purely negative?

Caplan, consulting his American Heritage Dictionary, claims: "Anarchism is a negative; it holds that one thing, namely government, is bad and should be abolished. Aside from this defining tenet, it would be difficult to list any belief that all anarchists hold."

The last sentence is ridiculous. If we look at the works of Tucker, Kropotkin, Proudhon and Bakunin (for example) we discover that we can, indeed list one more "belief that all anarchists hold." This is opposition to exploitation, to usury (i.e. profits, interest and rent). For example, Tucker argued that "Liberty insists. . . [on] the abolition of the State and the abolition of usury; on no more government of man by man, and no more exploitation of man by man." [cited in *Native American Anarchism--A Study of Left-Wing American Individualism* by Eunice Schuster, p. 140] Such a position is one that Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin would agree with.

In other words, anarchists hold two beliefs--opposition to government and opposition to exploitation. Any person which rejects either of these positions cannot be part of the anarchist movement. In other words, an anarchist must be against capitalism in order to be a true anarchist.

Moreover it is not at all difficult to find a more fundamental "defining tenet" of anarchism. We can do so merely by analysing the term "an-archy," which is composed of the Greek words an, meaning "no" or "without," and arche, meaning literally "a ruler," but more generally referring to the principle of rulership, i.e. hierarchical authority. Hence an anarchist is someone who advocates abolishing the principle of hierarchical authority--not just in government but in all institutions and social relations.

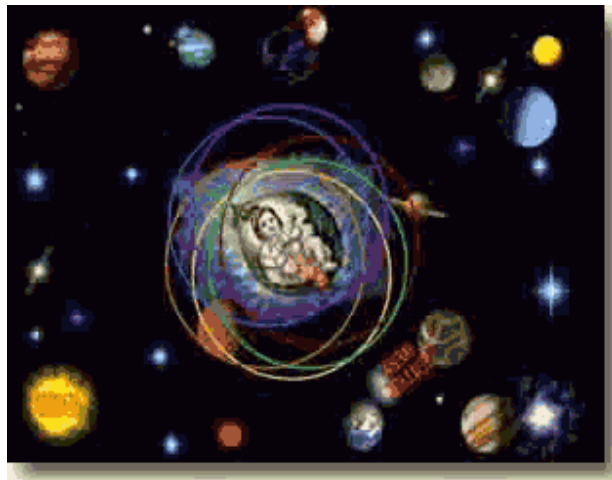
Now, if you look carefully at how the author of the above quotation attempts to prove that anarchists hold to positive rather than only negative ideals, you will see that every evidence he offers entails "opposition to" something (e.g. government and exploitation). He shows nowhere that anarchists are "for" anything. So although he starts off objecting to a definition of anarchy as being purely negative, his own arguments only reinforce such a definition.

Prabhupada had a word for this: utopianism. I've explained previously in In2-MeC that "utopia" comes from Greek; it means "no place." Hence a negative idealist like an anarchist or Mayavadi, who defines his beliefs only in terms of what he or she is against, ends up nowhere.

Being utterly anti-government, anarchism ends up advocating a society in which no one has rights at all...and this in the name of complete freedom! If government is abolished, then there is no law. If there is no law, then someone can be enslaved, someone can be murdered, all without worries for the enslaver or the murderer. A criminal can do anything he wants, because there is no such thing as crime in anarchy.

Without law, people will form packs, like those in which wolves prey upon other animals. They will hunt the weak and unprotected. The stronger the mob, the stupider and more violent it will be.

In a world of anarchy consumer products could not be produced. Business could not be done. Without law to protect people's rights, who could do anything that resembles civilized human behavior? There would be no peace nor safety for anyone. In short, anarchy can never work. Anarchists are servants of deranged, impractical notions hatched from minds that are too disturbed by frustration with an imperfect society. They have a very slipshod grasp of the realities of human nature. Ultimately their vision of ideal freedom is a vision of complete animalism.

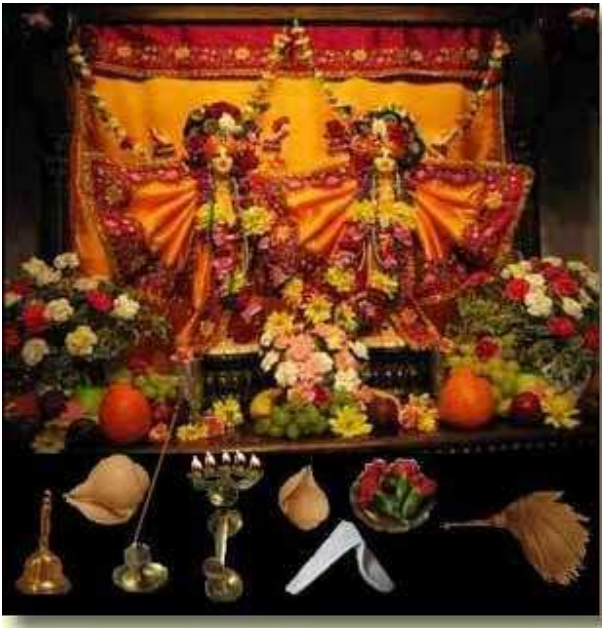


The In2-MeC Flash Animation startpage
(www.in2-mec.com)

This is just a reminder of the fun animations you'll find on the In2-MeC startpage. Click on different planets and you'll



have *darsana* of the all-beautiful Divine Couple



be able to offer *arati* to Sri-Sri Gaura-Nitai (just click on the items of *puja* paraphernalia)

find out what modern science is all about



see cloned swamis dance in the street while Earth is invaded from outer space



watch various colorful yantras and mandalas pass before your eyes

learn what happens when Grisby opens his third eye.



All animations are in sound, so make sure your computer's audio is enabled! The animations take a bit of online time to download. Kindly be patient. Once they are loaded to your hard disk, you can enjoy them offline as much as you like.

*Wroclaw, Poland
19 August 2004*

Many devotees try to argue with the sastras. Like we can accept 50% of Prabhupada's words. This text [7 July] I found very instructive as well as all texts on this page. It helps me a lot in my KC.

I wanted to ask Your Holiness if by chance you could kindly visit Slovenia. We would be very happy if this could happen by Lord Krishna's grace. As a member of Slovene National Council I just present the invitation in the name of all slovene devotees also. Thank you for all your inspiration.

Thank you for your kind observations. You are free to reproduce anything in In2-MeC that is helpful for your preaching. The warning at the bottom of each page that In2-MeC material may be reproduced only with permission is merely a formality.

Regarding my visiting Slovenia, I shall keep it in mind, though with my present schedule there is no time space open for many months to come.



*HH Bhakti-tirtha Maharaja
with Nelson
Mandela*

A letter from HH Bhakti Caru Maharaja about HH Bhakti-tirtha Maharaja

I did not phone Bhakti Tirtha Maharaj yesterday, thinking that I would rather wait until he gets the pathologist's report. However, in the evening, I received a phone call from one of Maharaj's disciples, Citi-sakti devi dasi, who is a doctor herself. In a voice choked with emotion, she informed me that she just learned from one of her Godsisters in Washington that Maharaj's report says that his cancer is on level four plus. I did not know what that count meant, but I could understand that it must be quite ominous.

I immediately phoned Washington. Once again, I admired how wonderfully Maharaj has trained up his disciples. I know how a disciple generally feels at a time like this, naturally wanting his spiritual master to take rest without disturbance, but as soon the Mataji who answered the phone realized that I was on the line, she immediately informed Maharaj.

Maharaj was as jovial as ever. From his voice, one could never imagine that he is in such a critical health condition. He informed me that the report from the hospital was bad. He decided to take a second opinion and had a CAT scan. That report was even worse. However, he is taking everything in stride. He feels a profound serenity deep within himself.

That morning, he gave class to about one hundred devotees. He mentioned that he read out my posting to the GBC conference, and they appreciated it very much.

He started to tell me how fast everything is moving for him at this stage. He prayed for purification, but never did he imagine that it would happen in such a way. Some devotees told him to take back his prayer. However, he replied, "No, let it come the way Krsna wants."

He started to describe the critical condition of our movement. He told me about the book that Madhusudani Radha and her husband printed, consisting of writings by about fifteen scholarly persons with knowledge of Sanskrit (who at some point in time were involved with ISKCON). Although most were favorable to ISKCON, some of them proposed that Srila Prabhupada deviated from our previous acaryas and

pursued his own ideas to serve his purpose, diminished the position of a woman, displayed a racist attitude, and in order to establish himself, over-emphasized the status of a guru.

Maharaj continued, "So many people are becoming attracted to Narayana Maharaj. That shows that they are getting something from him that they are not getting in ISKCON. Why don't we create a loving and caring atmosphere? Then no one will want to go away. We are leading the movement rather mechanically, somehow managing to just maintain. We are not really putting our hearts into it.

"I used to organize myself on a half-hour basis. But now, I am practically immobile. Even to go to the bathroom, I have to limp with my crutches. In this situation, I could become angry with Srila Prabhupada that 'Why did you put me in a situation like this? All my programs were set: so many lecture tours, seminars, workshops. The plane tickets were already purchased. Then all of a sudden!' But I am prepared to accept whatever Krsna wants. If he wants me to serve elsewhere, I am ready to go there."

Maharaj emphasized that the sufferings of so many devotees had become too much for him to bear. He was praying very intensely to Srila Prabhupada that he wants to become purified, become a better disciple, and help those who are struggling, at any cost.

We spoke for more than half an hour. I just wanted to share some of the wonderfully enlightening points that Maharaj shared with me. I found them to be extremely revealing. I am sure you will also feel the same. Moreover, it shows what a wonderful devotee Bhakti Tirtha Maharaj is. We can learn so much from his extremely advanced example.

He ended the conversation by saying, "I love you very much." I know that he will express the same love and care to all of you, also.

**Book Review: *Brothers in Divinity*
*Sakhya Rasa in Bengali Vaisnavism***
by Priya Menarth
(Carlson-Aloha Sonicbooks 2004)



This review is impelled by the labyrinthian spirit of Jorge Luis Borges

No doubt this essay will, on one or another "Gaudiya" website, touch off what the flinty seamen of the Spanish Armada called a *cacafuego*. But I am a citizen of truth. I am not a thrall of some buzzing Internet hive mind. Fortified by a melancholy firmness of will I must brave this execrative coeliac-flux. There is no one else I can see than myself who will take up the cudgel on behalf of probably the greatest, yet surely most unsung, genius of contemporary Vaisnava writing in the English language. I mean Priya Menarth, the Diotima of the philosophy of *rasa*. I ought not compare myself to Socrates, but who else in today's Symposium of cyberspace will step forward to draw attention to and defend her luminous insights? My authority is slight and easily challenged. Still, in Menarth's words are blazing fire and steadfast conviction. I draw my strength from her, not from mere impudence.

"Dr. Miss", as Menarth is known by her small circle of associates, received her Ph.D. in Sanskrit a decade ago from the University of Kuruksetra under the able guidance of Dr. D.B. Sen Sharma. Since then she has lived as a *sadhvi* in a single bare room within sight of the Mahavidya Devi Mandira in Mathura. It was here she finished her first book, 850 pages long, printed in a run of only 500 copies, entitled *Prema, Pema, Agape and Mercurius: Transcendental Emotionalism in Medieval Vaisnava, Buddhist, Christian and Alchemical Writings*. The title leads one to believe it is a dry exercise in comparative mysticism. In fact it is golden necklace that links together the pearls of esoteric wisdom of four traditions of spiritual ecstasy. I have not found another book like it anywhere. "Astounding", "Mind-boggling", "Incredible" are not words enough for the range of scriptural evidence and linguistic analysis that Menarth marshalls. Her stunning revelation of the indisputable link between the traditional hermeneutics of Vaisnavism's four *yuga-avatars* and the traditional inner teaching of the "Fourfold Work" of alchemy (Albedo, Rubedo, Nigredo and Gold) is just one of the many heroic forays into sibylline realms of scholarship that this book demonstrates.

At the Delhi Book Fair last year I met a professor from Pennsylvania, Curtis Bagnoreggio, one of the fortunate few Western scholars to acquire a precious copy of *Prema, Pema, Agape, and Mercurius* when it briefly appeared for sale on the shelves of better Indian bookstores in 1997. "My head is still reeling," he told me. "I swore to myself that I am going to write a summary introductory study of Priyaji's book. But it will take a half a decade and thousands of miles of travel to verify her sources. Her command of Sanskrit and Pali texts I can understand, but where in India of all places was she able to peruse such a wide range of Vulgate and other medieval European-language manuscripts?"

The hive mind of the "Gaudiya" Internet intelligensia greeted *Prema, Pema, Agape and Mercurius* with the worst sort of insult: complete and utter omission. Type in the name "Menarth" into the Turbo-powered search engines of pompous pretension, and you're sure to be informed there is *no match* in the archive! Until I sat at my computer to key in these words, no brief of rectification had anywhere been composed.

Yet *Prema, Pema, Agape and Mercurius*, unparalleled as it most assuredly is, is not the reason why my fingers fly across the keyboard today.

"Dr. Miss" has just released a new book, *Brothers in Divinity: Sakhya Rasa in Bengali Vaisnavism*. It transcends even her previous transcendental book because *Brothers* is published as per the method of sages who lived prior to the Kali Yuga. In other words *the book exists only as sound vibration!* It is *not* a gross publication of paper and ink!

Brothers is available to the public via the Internet as a sound file. Unfortunately (in my opinion) it is not spoken by Priyaji herself, but by one of her few disciples, Mr. Larry Carlson (Lalgopal das). He has posted it at one of his websites. You can hear it directly online for free but only in "Aloha" code, which is unintelligible to those who have not purchased a proprietary decoder from Mr. Carlson. Still, even in coded form the listening experience of *Brothers* floods and sanctifies the heart with its auric purity.

This book, like *Prema, Pema, Agape and Mercurius* before it, is doubtless fated to be dismissed by the pseudo-intellectuals for nothing other than Pratyaksavada reasons. Mark this well: I predict here today that they will declare *Brothers in Divinity* a word-for-word re-reading of *Sri-Sri Preyo Bhakti Rasarnava*, "The Nectar Ocean of Fraternal Devotion" composed by Sri Nayananda Thakura in 1731 AD, as it was translated into English in 1994 by HG Dasaratha Suta Prabhu (Nectar Books, PO Box 574, Union City Ga 30251).

Those who would insinuate that Priya Menarth dedicated seven years of her life (1997-2004) to copying the work of another translator calumniate her illustrious figure. Don't believe such tripe for a minute. These fellows are chained tightly by their false egos to crude monoliths carved by the neurons of their brains as imperfect representations of the already imperfect, hulking gross idols of data that clog the gates of their senses. Lacking the spiritual strength to break free of what their fallible eyes and ears *misinform* them of, the pseudo-intellectuals are forever stayed from spreading the divine wings of *svatah-siddha jnana* dormant in the spirit soul. They can never soar free into the eternal sunlight of absolute knowledge. Thus they are in no position to make any valid judgement of *Brothers in Divinity*.

As to the apparent identical content of *Brothers in Divinity* and "The Nectar Ocean of Fraternal Devotion", ah! The mystery! *Omnis mundi creatura quasi liber et pictura nobis est in speculum!*

In that philological fragment by Novalis--the one numbered 2005 in the Dresden edition--we find an outline of the theme of a total identification with a given author. Hence a writer of our time may, by a mystical method of mind (which, interestingly, Larry Carlson/Lalgal das has christened "to medijate"), can *become* an author of another time. Priya Menarth "medijated" Sri Nayananda Thakura. Thus his book is *her* book. Dararatha Suta Prabhu is *her* translator. "But," the rationalist will protest, "her book appeared in 2004 whereas Dasaratha Suta's translation appeared ten years before!" This is unworthy of consideration. In spiritual time there is no linear ordering of before and after. Spiritual time enriches. That which happens in spiritual time happens always, but as it continues to happen, it becomes better and better in its perfection. *Brothers in Divinity* is "The Nectar Ocean of Fraternal Devotion" in enriched perfection!

Priya Menarth did not want to compose a book LIKE *Preyo Bhakti Rasarnava*--which is easy--but the *Preyo Bhakti Rasarnava* itself. As I have already hinted, *she never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original*; she did *not* propose to copy it. Her admirable intention was to produce an eternal vibration (*sabda*) that would coincide--word for word and line for line--with those of Nayananda Thakura. But in English translation.

"My intent is no more than astonishing," she wrote me from Mathura on the 30th of September, 1997, at the start of her labors. "The final term in a theological or metaphysical demonstration--God, the objective world, causality, the form of the universe--is no less the timeless truth than this book I am composing. The only difference is that the philosophers publish the intermediary stages of their labor in pleasant volumes and I have resolved to do away with those stages." In truth, not one worksheet remains to bear witness to her years of effort.

Suspecting that the pseudo-intellectuals will misinterpret her explanation, I shall unpack it. The philosophy of transcendence--which is called theology when God is firmly at the center, or metaphysics when eternal principles like Truth and Beauty are at the center--strives to demonstrate ultimate reality. There are final terms that signify that reality, terms like "God", "the objective world", "causality", "the form of the universe." As long as we are in bodily consciousness, we do not know what these terms actually signify. Those realities always exist closer to us than our jugular vein, but our ignorance blocks our comprehension of them. All we have by which to get a grip on these realities are words, "final terms" Priya Menarth calls them, words that mean *something* to us, but *what*, we are not sure. Philosophers attempt to push, to expand, the envelope of the subjective meanings that we have for final terms. The expansion of meaning happens in stages over the centuries. These stages are marked by the volumes that these philosophers leave us. The ultimate, objective realization of the full meaning of a final term--"God", for example--reveals a reality that was *already there*. It is not "new." Seizing upon this truth, Priya Menarth asked, "Why, then, should I write a 'new' book? Let me write a book *that is already there!*"

Yet precisely because of the enriching nature of spiritual time, Menarth's *Brothers in Divinity* is more subtle than Nayananda's/Dasaratha Suta's *Preyo Bhakti Rasarnava*/Nectar Ocean of Fraternal Devotion. The latter, in a clumsy fashion,

opposes the pseudo-intellectual fictions of status in transcendental *rasa*. Menarth eludes this controversy with complete naturalness, taking the whole issue to a higher level.

Dasaratha Suta writes in his Preface:

...this book fills an important gap in the presently available Gaudiya Vaisnava *siddhanta*. Most of the Six Gosvamis and their successors have written exclusively on the *madhura-rasa*; a few modern devotees give certain interpretations to this fact. However, those devotees who are actually inclined to the devotional feelings of other *rasas* have not found much for their *bhajan*.

The mood of the early 1990's is palpable here. There was a triumphalist but puerile drum-beating for the *madhurya-rasa* even from some seniormost disciples of Srila Prabhupada. They urged ISKCON to bring the conjugal mood of Radha-Krsna *lila* to the forefront of everything. This, they argued, was what is missing. This is why some devotees leave ISKCON for other institutions.

But our experience from 1994 to 2004 does not bear this out. Though for a while the flag of the conjugal mood was hoisted high, fragmentation seemed not only to spread in ISKCON but even in other organizations where this mood is given priority. Today the realization is that it takes a strong sense of *brotherhood* to hold an institution together. And in a spiritual institution, that brotherly flavor must likewise be spiritual. Hence Priya Menarth, speaking through Larry Carlson/Lalgopal, advises us:

...this book fills an important gap in the presently available Gaudiya Vaisnava *siddhanta*. Most of the Six Gosvamis and their successors have written exclusively on the *madhura-rasa*; a few modern devotees give certain interpretations to this fact. However, those devotees who are actually inclined to the devotional feelings of other *rasas* have not found much for their *bhajan*.

Just see: the uneasy defensiveness is gone, replaced by a sublime confidence. A new light is shed on the phrase, "a few modern devotees". They are seen not to be bold trailblazers, but mere "up to date" elitists whose haughtiness leaves them isolated. And now the phrase "those devotees who are actually inclined to the devotion feelings" leaps off the page with ecstatic dynamism. The force of a unified majority is the key to the bliss of the *sankirtana* movement! That key is, in short, *brotherhood in divinity*.

It is no less astounding to consider passages in the chapters of the text. For example, let us examine the passage in Chapter Three ("Ingredients for Transcendental Mellow") subheaded *Kaishora* is Krsna's Eternal Age. Therein Dasaratha Suta writes:

Krsna in His figure of *kaishora* is perpetually worshiped in Vraja, for all the devotees beginning with those in the mood of *dasya* favor meditating upon Him in that age. Therefore, dear readers--please worship Kishor Mohan in Vraja, taking shelter of either the mellow of *dasya*, *sakhya*, *vatsalya* or *madhura*.

In 1994, many dismissed this as nebulous sophistry. "Of course Kishor Mohan is the most perfect of Krsna's perfect appearances", they would say with impatience, "but to really access the nectar of this appearance, devotees must enter the *gopi-bhava*, for who love Kishor Mohan more than the damsels of Vraja? This allowance for the entrance of other *rasas* into the worship of Kishor Mohan simply waters the whole context down!"

But this argument falls flat before the version of Priya Menarth/Lalgopal:

Krsna in His figure of *kaishora* is perpetually worshiped in Vraja, for all the devotees beginning with those in the mood of *dasya* favor meditating upon Him in that age. Therefore, dear readers--please worship Kishor Mohan in Vraja, taking shelter of either the mellow of *dasya*, *sakhya*, *vatsalya* or *madhura*.

Here the phrase "all the devotees" rings with the conviction of an insight that pervades all the Vraja *rasas*. The pseudo-intellectual divisiveness that entertains in the warped imagination a pitting of one *rasa* against another is totally shut out. The phrase "taking shelter" looms overall. *Rasa*-quibbling means the *absence* of real shelter at the lotus feet of Sri Kishor Mohan!

I have reflected that it is permissible to see in this "final" *Preyo Bhakti Rasarnava* a kind of palimpsest, through which the traces--tenuous but not indecipherable--of the "previous" version should be translucently visible. Only a second Priya Menarth, inverting the other's work, would be able to exhume and revive all the imbedded connections.

Menarth (perhaps without wanting to) has, by means of a new technique, "medijation", enriched the halting and rudimentary art of reading aloud: this new technique is that of the deliberate anachronism and the erroneous attribution. This technique, whose applications are infinite, prompts us to go through the BBT edition of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* as if it were posterior to the palm-leaf version of Srila Vyasadeva. This technique fills all that we placidly think we know from what we have read with new adventure.

To listen online *for free* to Larry Carlson/Lalgopal reading the coded version of *Brothers in Divinity*, click on this web address

<http://www.larrycarlson.com/medijate/index2.htm>

and after the startpage has loaded, click on the Aloha tab.

Do you know what a Japanese Mooncookie is? Click on this web address:

<http://shop2.youmall.jp/~eggless/~dbop/ec/index.htm>

Produced by Mahanandini dd. The baked items shown are all *prasada!*

*Wroclaw, Poland
17 September 2004*







This email arrived yesterday:

As you may recall, I've been catching up on your blog entries from last year. I just finished reading your entries from August 1 and 2, 2003.

<http://www.in2-mec.com/J-Pages/J030801.htm>

<http://www.in2-mec.com/J-Pages/J030802.htm>

It looked to me like you were grouping together different conspiracy-type things such as the poisoning thing, dividing up the world, etc., along with admitted sexual abuse and torture. I'm not sure if this was your intention, so I'm writing to ask. I would agree that throwing all sorts of accusations at sincere Vaishnavas is foolish and there do seem to be many crazies out there, but a lot of very serious charges have been made concerning treatment of children in gurukuls, and I'm not sure if these can be properly filed in the same group as poison conspiracy, book editing complaints, or zonal guru issues. In case you're not that familiar with the gurukuli complaint, you can find it here:

<http://www.wturley.com/PDF/complaint0606.pdf>

I emailed back this reply:

In the August 1 2003 essay, I wrote this:

Now, I certainly do know that there is real dirt under ISKCON's bed that hasn't been brought into the light of every devotee's knowledge. But just because a conspiracy theorist's argument starts with a valid fact--that there is dirt under ISKCON's bed--does not mean that the logic that he constructs after that fact is valid. Spring water comes up from out of the earth in a pure state, but when it flows down to the ocean it becomes undrinkable. Similarly, when a fact comes to light it gleams with the purity of simple truth; but when it is seized by a loudmouth blinded by his own anger--or by a crafty schemer who wishes only to advance his own agenda--the purity of that fact is lost, being mixed with flaming invective and deceptive propaganda.

So here I've confirmed there that there is dirt under ISKCON's bed. I did not mention the gurukula tragedies in these essays of 1 and 2 August 03, but they are certainly an example of what I mean. My point is that even these misdeeds tell a simple truth of human failure in meeting the pure ideals that Srila Prabhupada expected of his Society. That simple truth, which illustrates (in a negative sense) that all we need in ISKCON is to be more Krsna conscious, is simply ignored by those who rush in to propagandize for mundane justice and reform. I am not saying that the ills of ISKCON should be swept under the rug. I am saying that they should be dealt with in a way that keeps the single goal of our movement at the forefront. Not that this goal--Krsna consciousness--should become the servant of the political fashions of democratic society.

While re-reading these two essays I realized I wasn't really saying anything very constructive. I was reacting to some really crazy stuff I had seen on the Internet. This stuff certainly is not constructive. It is just criticism. So I was basically saying that it is hard for me to understand how someone claiming to be a devotee can absorb him/herself so deeply in the poisonous rasa of fault-finding.

Regarding the "single goal of our movement," below are two references I found in the Vedabase in which Srila Prabhupada succinctly explains that goal. Note that he says that in this age there will always be light and darkness. And note carefully how he defines light. He does not define it as "human rights" or "justice" or "transparency", or by other cliched terms that have become shibboleths of political correctness.

But there is always light and darkness. Always. So the light party will be also there. This is the only, that take to Krsna consciousness. That is stated in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. *Kaler dosa-nidhe rajann asti hy eko mahan gunah*. In the Kali-yuga, it is an ocean of faults. *Dosa-nidhi*. *Nidhi* means ocean, and *dosa* means faults. But there is one opportunity. *Kaler dosa-nidhe rajann asti hy eko mahan gunah*. Very great profit. What is that? *Kirtanad eva krsnasya*. Simply by chanting Krsna's name and becoming Krsna con..., one shall be freed from all these calamities and he'll go back to home, back to Godhead. Simply by this. *Kirtanad eva krsnasya*. This very word is used. *Mukta-sangah param vrajet*. So this is the only shelter. If people take to Krsna consciousness, they'll be saved from all the calamities of this age. Otherwise, there is no other... Now they are going to the forest, the hippies. Eh? *Acchinna-dara-dravina gacchanti giri-kananam*. *Giri-kananam* means to the forests, to the hills. They'll go. *Acchinna-dara-dravinam*. *Dara* means wife, and *dravina* means money. So they'll be separated from wife and money, and they'll go to the forest and hills, being disappointed. This is happening already.

This is Kali-yuga. But there is remedy. There is remedy. *Kalau dosa-nidhe rajan*. The faults of this age, just like ocean. Just like in the ocean, you cannot... Pacific Ocean... If you are put into the Pacific Ocean, you do not know how your life will be saved. It is very difficult. Even if you are very expert swimmer, so it is not possible that you can cross the Pacific Ocean. That is not possible. Similarly, the Kali-yuga, as it is stated in the *Bhagavata*, that infected with so many anomalies that there is no way out. But there is one medicine only: *kirtanand eva krsnasya mukta-sangah param vrajet*. That is also described, that "If you chant Hare Krsna mantra," *kirtanad eve krsnasya*, "especially the name Krsnasya, *mukta sangah*, you will be relieved from the infection of this Kali yuga."

ISKCON, being a world-wide society of mostly neophyte devotees who struggle to keep principles that stand in defiance of the current of the modern world, does indeed suffer to some extent from the infection of Kali-yuga. This shouldn't be surprising. In those August '03 essays I point out that the places where the most dangerous diseases are to be found are the hospitals. But that fact is no reason for agitating that all hospitals should be closed!

As Srila Prabhupada used to say, "What's done is done." The past can't be changed. The sinful reactions now coming down upon ISKCON from its past episodes of darkness can't be waved away by wishful thinking. We have many lessons to learn. Some of these lessons are going to teach us about Kali's strategy of using "good" (the rectification of injustice by worldly legal means) to tie down "the best" (the transcendental *sankirtana* mission).

In my opinion, those who propose to cure the infection of Kali-yuga by measures that are not supportive of what Srila Prabhupada called the "one medicine only" are themselves fomenting darkness against light. As we see from Srila Prabhupada's description of this age, people today are so overcome by frustration that they are

blindly driven to any extreme to try to get relief. But to wage a court case aimed at the destruction of the very movement that administers the "one medicine only" to the whole world is not helping cure the greater ills of this age. It is a case of cutting off the nose to spite the face.

Child abuse is a grave spiritual offense. Jesus Christ declared that better a person enter deep water with a millstone around his neck than do harm to a child. Child abuse is also a very emotional social issue. But we need to keep a close watch on the emotions that it stirs up, because in our present conditioned state, our emotions are impure.

Emotions are like over-excited horses that can at any moment charge blindly against intelligence and sobriety. Democracy (Prabhupada called it "demon-crazy") is a servant of populist emotions. Again and again in history it is seen that the voice of democracy too often shouts down sober persons who advocate tolerance, caution, and scriptural reason. In this way democracy follows the stampeding emotions from bad to worse predicaments.

The Internet purports to be a loud voice of democracy. The forums where "devotees" come to play the populist game of *I'm a Victim*--by giving vent to their raw, unrefined emotions, by calling for the crippling of the ISKCON mission in the name of equality, justice, punishment, and drastic reform, and by shouting down sober thinking whenever it shows its gentle face--are obviously not the Internet sites that inspire the reader to enthusiastically perform the *yuga-dharma*. No, here you'll get the association of no-hopers like the German householder couple who, just after their *guru* Harikesa fell down, told me, "We don't think that 'just chanting Hare Krsna' is enough."

It's sad to see people join the Hare Krsna movement with bright hopes only to later meet with misfortune. Still, our philosophy warns us that becoming a devotee does not mean that we will never again see misfortune in this lifetime. Our philosophy asks us to keep a firm grip on clear intelligence and cautious sobriety so as *not* to angrily, immodestly style ourselves as blameless victims of some sinister conspiracy ("Man is born free but everywhere lives in chains!"). The very fact that we are born in Kali-yuga demonstrates that we are hardly blameless for the bad things that happen to us. Ours is not an age of innocence!

What can be said about those "devotees" who take victimology (a modern disease of the emotions introduced by Jean-Jacque Rousseau back in the 1700's) to such an extreme that they turn on Srila Prabhupada's world-wide *sankirtana* mission, laying upon it all the blame for their lives' problems?

They're upstarts...that's what *I* think, anyway. Dictionary definition:

A person of humble origin who attains sudden wealth, power, or importance, especially one made immodest or presumptuous by the change; a parvenu.

Such upstarts have become suddenly important (an important threat to the *sankirtana* movement, if nothing else) because of the growing influence of populist emotionalism upon the dynamics of ISKCON society.

Now, to switch gears while moving in the same direction of thought, I have something to add about pseudo-intellectuals. These folks are typically less emotional than the populist upstarts. But their goal is basically the same, though their way to the goal runs through the intellectual realm.

The populists get highly agitated by moral and social contradictions. Let's take an old rhetorical example: suppose a woman is discovered bathing a baby in a tub of dirty water. The populists want this morally outrageous contradiction instantly done away with, even if it means throwing the baby out with the dirty bathwater.

When a pseudo-intellectual reads scripture, he delights in finding contradictions. Why? Well, one thing is, he looks like an important scholar when he publishes a paper that points out contradictions that nobody else noticed before. But more to the point, scriptural contradictions are his cue for calling for the baby to be thrown out with the bathwater.

Here's a typical argument:

"The accounts of creation presented in different chapters of Scripture X are in contradiction. Moreover, as a whole, Scripture X contradicts Scripture Y and Scripture Z. All these scriptures together contradict modern science. Acarya P offers an explanation for this, but that is his opinion only. I have a better idea. When it comes to affairs of this world, scripture should not be taken literally. Literal interpretation is quite all right where scripture tells of the internal, heart-to-heart relationship of God and His devotee. But when it comes to practical human life, scripture should be open to interpretation, since its statements in that sphere are obviously not absolute."

Here we have the recipe for secularism, an important comfort zone for those of abiding faith in human-centered ideals. Scholars even know how to make secularism sound like a religious virtue. Shukavak's book about Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, *Hindu Encounters with Modernity*, argues that it takes a devotee of strong *bhakti* to conform to the ways and beliefs of secular society, where the narrative of how the world came to be accords to the Testament of Saint Charles Darwin. "No need to fight good old St. Charlie," the pseudo-intellectual smiles benignly. "Fighting the evolutionary account of the world is only for neophytes who haven't yet realized the underlying, allegorically-stated truth of scripture--that *this* world belongs to man, and *that* world belongs to God."

Hence ISKCON--which exists in *this* world, not *that* world--could be reformed to embody modern secular, democratic ideals. *Could be*, if its members weren't such neophytes who just have to believe that their God has from the start personally guided every little detail of our world exactly as scripture says...or at least as *this* chapter of *this* scripture says, which is in contradiction with other chapters of the same scripture, and of course is furthermore in contradiction with many other scriptures. And completely in contradiction with modern science, which, as we all know, has proven what's *really* going on in the material world.

That's why I call these fellows pseudo-intellectuals: their faith is ultimately reposed in sense data, not in the intellect. "Seeing is believing" is a motto of faith in the empirical method of knowledge. But in fact an intellect that is more detached from bodily values is able to call into serious question the validity of "seeing" through the

senses. As Thomas Moore (1779-1852) put it, "The world is seldom what it seems; to man, who dimly sees, realities appear as dreams, and dreams realities." I never tire of pointing out in these In2-MeC essays that guys like Thomas Moore were not even devotees--they just had some flashes of real intelligence!

In a nutshell, pseudo-intellectuals, like the populist upstarts, have an agenda: the preservation of the modern secular state. Dictionary definition of secularism:

The view that religious considerations should be excluded from civil affairs or public education.

A secularist can be at the same time a devout believer in God. But the theology of his belief must tend to conform to Deism more than Theism. Dictionary definitions:

Deism: the belief, based solely on reason, in a God who created the universe and then abandoned it, assuming no control over life, exerting no influence on natural phenomena, and giving no supernatural revelation.

(Hence, for there to be order in this world, man has to take control of what God abandoned. The deistic God transcends this world but does not pervade nor otherwise influence it. Recalling the baby and bathwater example, according to the Deists there is no "baby", i.e. God, in the "bathwater", i.e. the world. So there's no point in looking for anything holy and worth preserving in the bathwater. It's dirty, that's all, throw it all out--i.e., everything in this world is open to political manipulation according to mankind's needs of the moment.)

Theism: belief in one God (monotheism) transcending but yet in some way immanent in the universe. Contrasted with Deism. Other characteristics are usually associated with this monotheistic deity of theism: God is personal, the creator, the sustainer of existence; omnipotent, omnibenevolent, omniscient; supreme in power, reality, and value; the source and sanction of all values; and accessible to human communication.

Regarding scriptural contradictions, see what Srila Prabhupada has to say and how he ties that with theism:

Just like the cow dung is the stool of an animal, but the Vedic literature confirms that cow dung is pure. Now, you cannot argue, "It is stool of an animal. In one place you have condemned that if you touch the stool of an animal, you have to take bath thrice, and now you say cow dung, which is also stool of an animal, it is pure. Where is your argument?" You have to accept. That is called theism. Because the Vedas says, without any argument, you accept it. That is called theism. You cannot change. You cannot comment. That is called theism. *Astikyam. Brahma karma svabhava-ja.* And unless you have got such faith in the Vedic knowledge, you cannot make any progress. That is not possible. If you, with your poor fund of knowledge, you want to interpret, from the very beginning there is no question of progress.

Pseudo-intellectuals and populist upstarts immodestly jump to make fundamental changes in the philosophy and practice of Krsna consciousness. They do this because they are not really theists. They hold more to sense-based reason and/or emotion

than they hold on to Krsna's guiding hand behind all things that happen in this world. This is called *laukika-sraddha*, worldly faith. It is not *sastriya-sraddha*.

They may be devotees of some kind or other, these pseudo-intellectuals and populist upstarts. But as Prabhupada states above, they "cannot comment." It is not their *adhikara* to give instruction. If they presume for themselves the positions of instructors, "from the very beginning there is no question of progress."

Speaking of Shukavak's book, Krsna-kirti Prabhu at the *ISKCON Cultural Journal* website published the following essay on 10 September. It is not about *Hindu Encounters with Modernity* per se, which I "reviewed" on 12 August. (Mine was not a review, really, it was--as I stated in In2-MeC of that date-- a "search and destroy" of one chapter of the book. I was being deliberately provocative. Yes, once in a while I do enjoy (NYUK! NYUK! NYUK!) agitating the hive mind of a certain "Gaudiya" website.) Anyway, Krsna-kirti's essay is about an article Shukavak wrote that covers the same ground as Chapter 5 of *Hindu Encounters with Modernity*. I'm happy to note that he arrives at the same conclusion I did: that a devotee of today who subscribes to *adhunika vada* (the modern approach) in his understanding of *sastra* will turn into the very same sort of person that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura intended his *Sri Krsna Samhita* to be read by: the faithless Westernized Hindu.

Shri Krishna Samhita and ISKCON's Future

There is a book written by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura titled *Shri Krishna Samhita*, and over time devotees within ISKCON are going to hear more about this book and its precepts. *Shri Krishna Samhita* is a critical historical analysis of Vedic literature, including the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, using the academic techniques prevalent in the latter part of the 19th century. Devotees are going to hear more about it because it is being acclaimed by scholars on ISKCON's periphery and within ISKCON itself as providing an academic basis for strengthening the faith of its own members by reconciling Vedic texts with modern thought. As Tamal Krishna Goswami and Krishna Kshetra Prabhu in their essay "Re-Visioning ISKCON" declare, ". . . following the lead of nineteenth-century theologian Bhaktivinoda Thakura (1838 - 1914) [9], ISKCON can reexamine its traditional texts and reappropriate them in ways consistent with modernity, discerning the symbolic through critical scholarship." [1]. This is overtly a reference to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's work in *Shri Krishna Samhita*, which the footnote in the quoted declaration (the "[9]") confirms: "For the most authoritative work on Bhaktivinoda, see Shukavak 1999 [*Hindu Encounter with Modernity: Kedaranath Datta Bhaktivinoda, Vaisnava Theologian.*]

In the same book (*The Hare Krishna Movement*), Shukavak N. Das has contributed a short essay, "Bhaktivinoda and Scriptural Literalism," that concisely explains this position. Before examining in more detail Shukavak's thesis, it might be helpful to start off with his own experience in explaining to devotees the *adhunika vada*, or "modern approach" to understanding *shastra* (scripture).

I once presented a summary of Bhaktivinoda's analysis of Vedic history from his *Upakramanika* to an audience of Chaitanya Vaishnavas. I stated Bhaktivinoda's view that the *Bhagavata Purana* might not be a work compiled by the Vedavyasa 5,000 years ago, as orthodox Vaishnava tradition teaches, but may be a work not older

than 1,000 years, compiled by a southerner writing in the name of Vedavyasa. Bhaktivinoda had reached this conclusion by analyzing certain geographic and cultural aspects of the Bhagavata..28 He was voicing an opinion arrived at through the use of the techniques of the *adhunika vada*.

A suggestion such as this coming from a secular scholar steeped in western criticism would not be unusual and could be easily deflected, but coming from Bhaktivinoda, a teacher from within the tradition, it cast a spell of disbelief over my audience. Many doubts arose: perhaps Bhaktivinoda did not actually believe these things but used them as a "preaching tactic"; perhaps he wrote his work when he was young and still learning but later came to reject these views; or perhaps my understanding of his perspective was incorrect.

I was approached by one respected participant who was greatly perplexed by the mere suggestion that Bhaktivinoda may have said that the *Bhagavata* was only 1,000 years old or that it was not written by the Vedavyasa. I realized that this individual was upset because I had challenged one of his most sacred beliefs concerning certain historical details about that work, I had challenged his basic faith as a whole. The internal and subjective perspective of the traditionalist will not give credence to material facts that do not support and nurture religious faith. {[2]}

Evident here is the challenge to the faith of those devotees who always understood the Srimad Bhagavatam to be written by the Srila Vyasadeva and 5,000 years old. ISKCON's founder Srila Prabhupada quite explicitly affirms this age and authenticity of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* in his commentary on the same,

Some Mayavadi scholars argue that *Srimad-Bhagavatam* was not compiled by Sri Vyasadeva. And some of them suggest that this book is a modern creation written by someone named Vopadeva. In order to refute such meaningless arguments, Sri Sridhara Svami points out that there is reference to the *Bhagavatam* in many of the oldest *Puranas*. {[3]}

The big problem, of course, is the claim that the *Bhagavatam* is no more than 1,000 years and not written by Vyasadeva has its origin in Bhaktivinoda Thakura. Now we have a real crisis of authority on our hands: on the one hand, if we accept the authority of Srila Prabhupada's commentary (and for that matter Sridhara Swami's commentary which Lord Chaitanya also accepted), then we face the possibility that one of our stalwart *acharyas* (in this case Bhaktivinoda Thakura) has spoken something gravely wrong and offensive, and on the other hand if we are to accept the authority of Bhaktivinoda Thakura as quoted from *Shri Krishna Samhita*, then that significantly weakens our faith in the authority of Srila Prabhupada and other recognized *acharyas*. The fact that *acharyas* who are recognized as beyond fault can so contradict each other on points that are so critical to Gaudiya Vaishnava theology stands to permanently wreck faith in the whole enterprise of Gaudiya Vaishnava theology and practice. If no one can be accepted as an authority in Gaudiya Vaishnavism on account of such egregious contradiction, then loss of faith is a logical consequence.

Part of the problem is with how Shukavak (and others) present Bhaktivinoda Thakura's writings to Vaishnava audiences. Shukavak is convinced that the fact that Bhaktivinoda Thakura was a stalwart Vaishnava with great faith in Lord Chaitanya and Krishna and also wrote such things is self-evident proof that one can view the

scriptures through the lens of *adhunika vada* (modern criticism of scripture) and yet maintain even a superlative faith in Vaishnavism. Shukavak implicitly assumes that Bhaktivinoda Thakura actually held the views he penned in Shri Krishna Samhita. Is this assumption reasonable?

We can test this assumption with a counterfactual example. Let us say that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura somehow reappeared in the 21st century and found out that, as Shukavak himself points out, that "his historiography is completely out of date." ^{[4]} If his faith and devotion were to some extent a function of *adhunika vada*, then to the extent that current critical methods differed from the earlier methods on which his faith was in part based on could possibly result in some loss of faith. Since the underlying philosophical presumptions of modern historical criticism is not so much different than that of their 19th century predecessors, the differences arrived at by the older methods of historical criticism versus the newer methods probably would not be so different as to precipitate a crisis of faith. Nonetheless, fundamentally such methods rely on sense perception and inference, and the nature of conclusions solely based on these methods of understanding are thus subject to error--specifically the four defects of a conditioned soul. Today's trends in thinking and research over time often become discredited and quaint. An important philosophical point regarding *adhunika vada*, then, is that through *adhunika vada* one can never come to a correct, objective conclusion that is not subject to future revision; objective knowledge through this process is in theory unattainable. *Adhunika vada* thus cannot lead to higher knowledge about things which depend upon authority for understanding. (For that matter, there is plenty in the material world itself which defies the limited understanding of the human.) Bhaktivinoda Thakura's superlative faith in Krishna, therefore, cannot be a product of *adhunika vada* because *adhunika vada* is subject to change, refutation and self-contradiction in the course of time.

Since Bhaktivinoda Thakura's faith cannot be dependent on *adhunika vada*, then we might well ask why he spoke it at all? Although Shukavak seems to hold a different view, the view that seems compatible with Bhaktivinoda's high faith can be found in his declared audience:

With folded hands I humbly submit to my respected readers who hold traditional views, that where my analysis opposes their long held beliefs, they should understand that my conclusions have been made for persons possessing appropriate qualifications. What I have said about dharma applies to everyone, but with regard to matters that are secondary to dharma, my conclusions are meant to produce benefits in the form of intellectual clarification only for qualified specialists. All the subjects I have outlined in the Introduction concerning time and history are based on the logical analysis of Shastra. Whether one accepts them or not, does not affect the final spiritual conclusions. History and time are phenomenal subject matters (*artha-shastra*) and when they are analyzed according to sound reasoning much good can be done for India. ^{[5]}

So Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's intended audience, as he himself explains, are those who have certain "qualification" (western educated people) and who also do not accept the traditional means of understanding *shastra*. Preaching through *adhunika vada*, then, is to bring the faithless to the point of developing some respect for the authority of the shastras. Srila Prabhupada himself often did this, sometimes he would refer to the dictionary for the definition of a word when preaching to

westerners, sometimes he would quote current events and refer to scientific discoveries as he did in *Easy Journey to Other Planets*. The point of using examples and evidence in the course of preaching is to guide people in the direction of accepting Vedic authority. For example, when telling someone where the Sun is, we may refer them to a tree saying something like, "The Sun is in that tree over to your left." Now, the sun is not really in the tree, but if you look in the direction of the tree you are also looking in the direction of the Sun. If in a few years time the tree is cut down, then some other point of reference, perhaps a house, needs to be used to point someone in the direction of the Sun. The tree or the house is to the Sun what *adhunika vada* is to Vedic authority. Just as these local and temporary points of reference such as the tree or the house appear for some time and then disappear, so also do materialistic theories about reality appear and disappear. However, their utility lies in their potential to bring us to the threshold of devotion. *Bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyante vasudevam sarvam iti....* Bhaktivinoda Thakura's intent in presenting *Shri Krishna Samhita*, then, is to bring the faithless to the point of accepting some faith in shastra, for which he hopes that ". . . much good can be done for India." Accepting something from *shastra* as true and good is better than accepting nothing at all.

Something needs to be said, however, about who might benefit from and who might be harmed by *adhunika vada*. After all, one man's food is another man's poison. The Puranas, for example, are categorized according to each of the three modes of nature. Some Puranas, such as the *Bhagavata* and *Vishnu Puranas*, are meant especially for those in the mode of goodness whereas other Puranas, such as the *Shiva Purana*, are meant for those predominated more by the modes of ignorance. A Vaishnava partaking of religious rituals mentioned in some parts of Vedic literature can result in that Vaishnava's progressive degradation, whereas those same rituals may gradually elevate someone who is to begin with very fallen. In the case of utilizing *adhunika vada* as a means to understand *shastra*, for someone without any faith in shastra at all this could be of great help.

By clearing misunderstood statements within Vedic literature from the path of understanding--statements modern people may find exceedingly quaint or superstitious--our faithless but nonetheless educated gentleman through *adhunika-vada* could come to appreciate some highly elevated precept such as *rasa* as being superior to other concepts of love as found in other religions. This is the beginning of faith, because if someone actually comes to respect and factually understand something proffered by Vedic authority (whether it is the *guru* or *shastra*), then that opens the door to accepting as true other things found in the Vedas which before would have been dismissed as rubbish. This is something like following a map on a journey. As we progress on our journey and encounter landmarks predicted by the map, our faith grows in the authority of the map. In the same way, as people discover things in Vedic literature that are true, their faith grows to encompass more things from the Vedas as true that, before, would have been dismissed as fantasy. The distinctive characteristic of this person is that he or she is gradually rising from a position of ignorance and disbelief to a position of knowledge and faith.

Besides the faithless becoming faithful through the agency of *adhunika vada* is the person who already has faith but who wishes to enhance or strengthen his faith through the agency of *adhunika vada*. Like the faithless but educated gentleman, our devotee seeker also has doubts but unlike those who are gradually rising from a faithless condition, the devotee already has some developed faith in *shastra*

(otherwise, why else is he a devotee?) but is turning to worldly means (*adhunika vada*) to try to understand *shastra*. Using our map analogy to describe this, we can say that the devotee has lost some faith in his map and is turning to other means to find his way. Some things can shake our faith. Perhaps he has been chanting Hare Krishna for years yet does not perceive any tangible reduction in his material desires. Perhaps he had a fall down. We start to doubt, "The map no longer works...." So instead our doubtful devotee gradually begins to replace Vedic authority with *adhunika vada* as an authority and comes to rely on it more and more. For this devotee there may be some satisfaction in the conclusions derived from *adhunika vada*, and because our devotee believes himself to be advancing in spiritual knowledge as a result of cultivating an understanding of *shastra* from a worldly standpoint, he gradually (and happily) loses access to the absolute and objective knowledge that was once available to him. It should be remembered that one of the defining characteristics of *adhunika vada* is that it can never produce an objective fact that can finally be accepted as it is and without possibility of future discredit. Devotees who use *adhunika vada* to enhance their own understanding of *shastra*, rather than simply as a means to enlighten the ignorant, will most likely see their faith and knowledge brought to the level of the audience Bhaktivinoda Thakura set out to enlighten.

Adhunika vada, then, is suitable only for people who are to begin with faithless and well steeped in a non-theistic world view. For devotees who try to improve their spiritual knowledge through *adhunika vada*, *adhunika vada* is just like poison. Devotees using academic methods such as historical criticism to evaluate facts and precepts of scripture will necessarily come to see their scriptures in a different way. In the west, this happened with Christianity:

If Christianity was supported and confirmed by objective science, then the Bible should be able to be subjected to the same historical analysis as the documents of any other religion. Scientific naturalism thus became the starting point for historical inquiry into the Bible. From that point of view, of course, the Scriptures looked very different than they did if viewed with the premise that they were revealed by God. The miracle stories, for instance, became embarrassments, rather than evidences. By modern critical standards historical reporting in Scripture looked inaccurate and fabricated. Particularly the Old Testament narratives, as well as many of the claims to authorship and dating, appeared implausible if the writings were viewed as simple products of the evolving faith of an ancient primitive people. {[6]}

What these [historical] methods meant for the Bible was that it would be treated, as was often said, just "like any other book." Once this initial move was made, of course, one was on a scholarly track that would yield conclusions consistent with the premise, namely, that the Bible was a cultural product just like any other book. {[7]}

Substitute the term "Gaudiya Vaishnavism" for "Christianity" and "*Srimad-Bhagavatam*" for "Bible," and you have a pretty good description of the philosophical direction ISKCON is heading in, considering that, as mentioned in the beginning of this essay, some of ISKCON's leaders advocate turning such academic methodologies on *shastra* for the sake of "re-visioning" ISKCON.

End Notes

1. Tamal Krishna Goswami, Krishna Kshetra Das, "Re-Visioning ISKCON", as printed in The Hare Krishna Movement, The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004. Page 418 - 419
2. Shukavak N. Das "Bhaktivinoda and Scriptural Literalism", as printed in The Hare Krishna Movement, The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004. Page 104 - 05
3. Srila Prabhupada. Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.1.1 purport
4. Shukavak N. Das 2004. Page 104
5. Ibid. Page 106
6. George M. Marsden. The Soul of the American University, From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief. Oxford University Press, New York, 1994. Page 174)
7. Ibid. Page 207

Helsinki, Finland
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**A Krsna Conscious Perspective on the '60's hit song
 Barefootin'**

When I was in high school, the Philadelphia soul singer Robert Parker released "Barefootin'" which quickly rose to the top of the American hit parade. On the Internet yesterday I found a free sample recording of the song. If you've never heard "Barefootin'" before (oh you culturally-deprived unfortunate!) you can now listen to a loop we made from the sample. Unfortunately what you hear when you click Play Sound is NOT the Robert Parker original. It's "Barefootin'" by a group called Basic Blue, who've done only a workmanlike imitation of Parker's bouncy, dance-infectious hit. But like I said, if you haven't heard it before, here's your chance to learn how the song goes. img/Barefooting.au

The words to the complete song:

Barefootin'
 as sung by Robert Parker

Everybody get on your feet, you make me nervous when you in your seat
 Take off your shoes and throw them away, come back and get them some other day
 We barefootin', we barefootin', barefootin', we barefootin'

Went to a party the other night, Long Tall Sally was out of sight
 Threw way her wig, and her high heels too, she was doin a dance without any shoes
 She's barefootin', she barefootin', barefootin', she barefootin'

Hey little gal with the red dress on, I bet you can barefoot all night long
 Take off your shoes and and tap your feet, we're doin a dance that can't be beat
 We barefootin', we barefootin', barefootin', we barefootin'

Lil John Henry told Peggy Sue, if I barefoot would you barefoot too
Sue told John, "I'll take you to school, I been barefootin since I was two
Barefootin', barefootin', barefootin', barefootin'

So everybody get on your feet, you make me nervous when you're in your seat
Take off your shoes and throw them away, come back and get them some other day
We barefootin', we barefootin', barefootin', we barefootin'

Obviously the big question in your mind is, "What has 'Barefootin'" got to do with
Krsna consciousness?

Hang on, I'm getting to that.



*Robert Campagnola,
whom we used to
know as Harikesa
Swami, as seen at the
EarthFuture website.*

Yesterday, too, I visited the EarthFuture Website of another musical Robert, the former Harikesa Swami, now presenting himself to the world as Robert Campagnola. Not long ago I heard he's living in Alachua, where he's sometimes seen at the ISKCON temple accompanied by his wife and pet poodle. Good news. But the message of his EarthFuture website hasn't changed to reflect his coming nearer to Srila Prabhupada's movement. He's still preaching that we can directly contact a nameless God, without any medium (e.g. Srila Prabhupada and the *sastra*) to stand in the way. He's still urging us all to "accept life as it is, in conscious awareness of ourselves and the universe that we are co-creating."

Good to know, Bob, that supernovas bursting forth in distant galaxies are YOUR work...with a little help from your "consciously aware" associates, of course. I presume the poodle participates in co-creating the universe too?

But let's get down to music. You know, EarthFuture offers Robert's unique recordings for sale: vocals that sound like Gary Lewis--

remember him? Comedian Jerry Lewis's son? His group was Gary Lewis and the Playboys. Their big hit was "Palisades Park".

--sung over an instrumental backing that too often sounds like amplified stomach rumblings. Unique, yes, but I suggest a change of pace. Back to the basics. Hey, tell you what, Robert, if you record the following song I've written especially for you--to be performed to the tune of Barefootin!--I'll promote it with great zeal right here on In2-MeC. I believe this song captures the spirit of your Earthfuture website.

Speculatin'

to be sung by Robert Campagnola

All you devotees quotin' Bhagwad-Geet
You make me nervous sayin' it's complete
Take off those blinders and throw 'em away
Come back and get them some other day
We speculatin' We speculatin' Speculatin' We speculatin'

I left ISKCON 'cause-a it ain't right
To hide a wanderin' mind clean out of sight
Blew off my guru gig, high ideals too
I'm-a speculatin' now like-a I can't lose
We speculatin' We speculatin' Speculatin' We speculatin'

Hey little gal with the red sari on
I bet you can speculate all night long
Give up your guru, get back to Earth
Let your mind go til you take your next birth
We speculatin' We speculatin' Speculatin' We speculatin'

Li'l Das Jahnu said to Devi Su
"If I speculate would you speculate too?"
Su told Jahn, "You too long in Gurukul--
I been speculatin' ever since I was two!"
We speculatin' We speculatin' Speculatin' We speculatin'

So all you devotees quotin' Bhagwad-Geet
You make me nervous when you say it's complete
Take off those blinders and throw 'em away
Come back and get them some other day
We speculatin' We speculatin' Speculatin' We speculatin'



Speculatin'!